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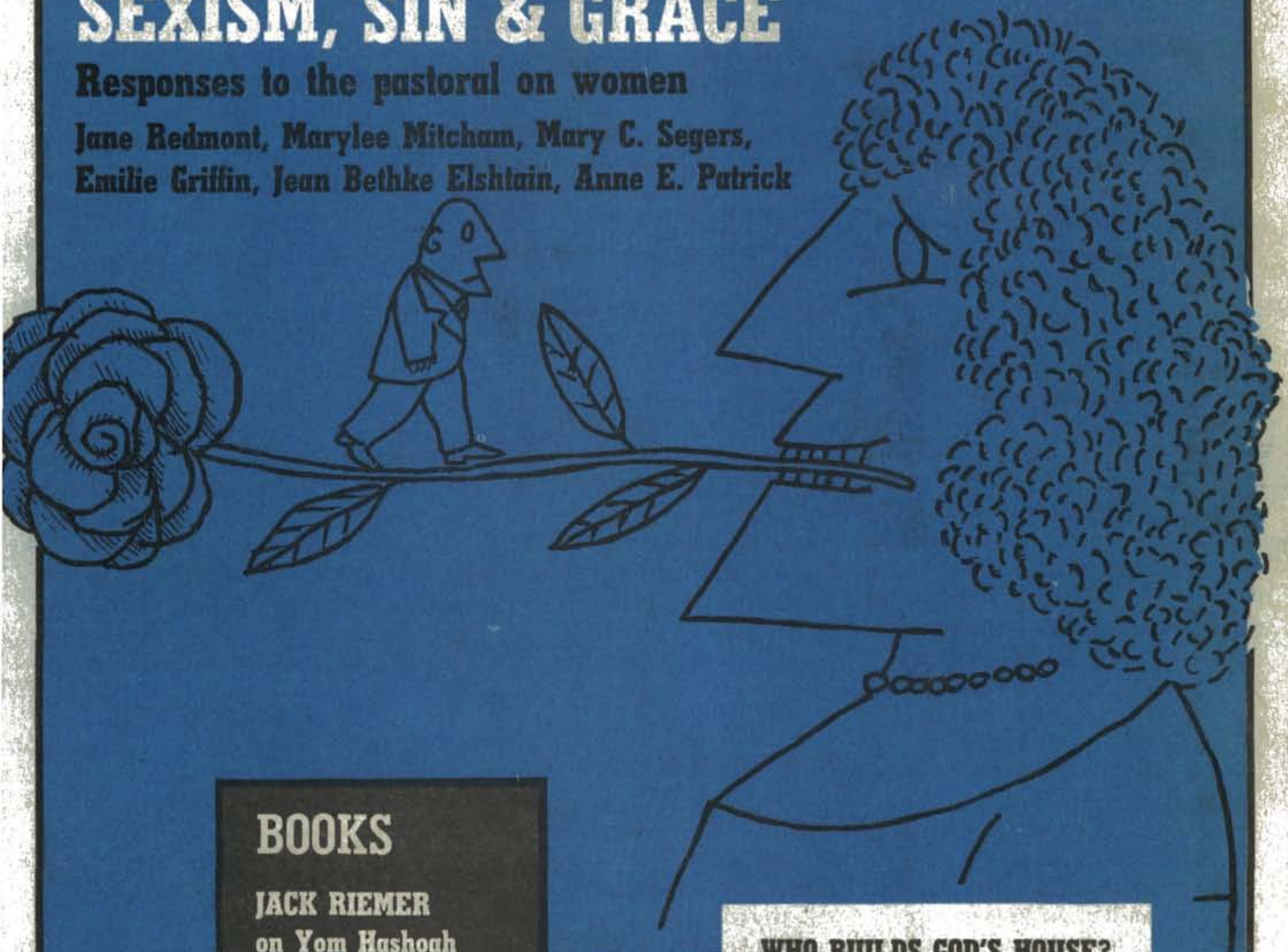
SEXISM, SIN & GRACE

Responses to the pastoral on women

Jane Redmont, Marylee Mitcham, Mary C. Segers, Emilie Griffin, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Anne E. Patrick



BOOKS

JACK RIEMER
on Yom Hashoah

MARK FEENEY
on The American Renaissance

LINDA SIMON
on John L'Heureux

JAMES P. DEGNAN
on Walker Percy

WHO BUILDS GOD'S HOUSE?
Joseph P. Spampinato

IS GORBACHEV'S NEW THINKING NEW?
Jeffrey W. Hahn

WHAT JOHNNY CAN'T READ
Eric Jorstad

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CORRESPONDENCE

Abetting Israel

Miami, Fla.

To the Editors: The article ["Occupying Each Other," April 22] is an excellent portrayal of the Israel/Palestinian conflict, but author Mitchell Cohen does not mention the third party, the citizens of the United States.

I daresay most of our citizens agonize over the fate of Israel. To us the Israelites are another of the many races of people in the world. They are no more important than the Haitians, the Salvadorans, or any other people who are in torment. Perhaps they are of less importance since they do possess the basic necessities of life.

Nevertheless, the U.S. taxpayer sees Prime Minister Shamir snarl at our peace plans but leave the country with his yearly $3 billion.

Our dilemma is: how can we lobby for reduction of aid to Israel when Israel must receive the aid to exist? Opposing the first question is the second: how can we supply Israel in her aggression on other peoples? With our continuing aid Israel is able to continue indefinitely her deliberate killing of the Palestinians.

Our government does not hesitate to use aid as a weapon with other countries. We punish Haitians for their elections by cutting aid, we punish the Nicaraguans for their government, and we punish the Panamanians for theirs. Is Israel of such special interest to us?

When our money is being used to destroy human life, we have no recourse but to notify the offending governments that our aid will expire within a specified time frame.

BILL QUINN

Land-for-peace policy

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: In the concluding paragraph of "Occupying Each Other" [April 22], Mitchell Cohen writes: "A sober analysis of the present situation . . . reveals little place for optimism." I concur with him when one views the situation as a snapshot frozen in time.

I nevertheless choose to differ with his pessimistic conclusion as regards the potential path which could be chosen as a way out of the present quagmire. The Israel Labor Party, led by Shimon Peres, has both a commitment and a political program which together open the door to a peace process.

Since 1967 and through the present uprising, Labor has continuously expressed its commitment to the notion of "land for peace." The fact that Shimon Peres continues to lead Yitzak Shamir in Israeli opinion polls—when people are asked "who is best suited to be Prime Minister of Israel?"—is a sign for cautious optimism.

Moreover, some clearly articulated support for the "land for peace" formula by Palestinian leaders would surely help the Israeli electorate believe that it is worth supporting leaders, in the upcoming Israeli elections, who are open to the kind of compromises necessary to bring peace to the Middle East.

SIMMY ZIV-EL
Executive Director
Friends of Labor Israel

Bogeymen of the past

Laurelton, N.Y.

To the Editors: Mitchell Cohen's cool analysis ["Occupying Each Other," April 22] is an exquisite example of the selective reasoning process that is taking place in American media, leaving unengaged readers with a "pox on both your houses" attitude. In the meantime, Palestinians continue to suffer under Israel's "kick and kill" policy and the status quo continues in Gaza and the West Bank.

Everything Cohen says is true: Arabs are shrill and inflammatory in their rhetoric. But only they? Sharon and Kahane (both Israeli government officials) match anything the PLO officials say. Do public opinion polls find Arabs militantly opposed to Israel? They do. Just as polls show that Israelis support the beatings and killings used by the Israeli army. So they do "occupy each other," as Cohen says. But there is another explanation to the current conflict and that can be found buried in the twenty-sixth paragraph of a *New York Times* story on March 13, 1988. John Kifner wrote:

"'There is little conflict among the rank and file (of the Israeli army) over the beatings of Palestinians,' said one Western military officer whose frequent contact with the Israeli army has left him with a critical but not unsympathetic attitude. 'Most of them,' the officer said, 'don't regard the Arabs as humans.'"

Is Israel really threatened by the Arabs? Is its very existence at stake? In recent interviews and speeches in New York, Abba Eban, hardly an Arab apologist, scoffed at the notions that it is or that Israel's circle-the-wagons posture is justified. Even Cohen has to go back twenty or forty years to justify Israel's self-defense claim. Israel is a superpower in the Middle East. Israel is known to have nuclear capability. It has the unswerving support of the U.S. media and government, whose own client states include Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. Iraq and Iran are otherwise engaged and Syria is tied down in Lebanon. How is Israel endangered? Bogeymen of

(Continued on page 379)

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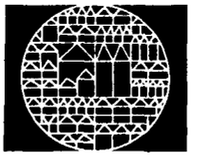

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STAFF

Editor: Margaret O'Brien Steinfels
Associate Editors: David Toolan, Karen Sue Smith, Patrick Jordan
Production Editor: Anne Robertson
Poetry: Rosemary Deen
Movies: Tom O'Brien
Staff: Harriette Balsky, Janice Gates, John A. Black
Advertising Manager: Ruth E. Taylor
Publisher: Edward S. Skillin

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A whirling adventure

Charles Curran will not be teaching at Catholic University in September. He has been displaced not, as his opponents would like to believe, to the gain of orthodoxy, but through a sorry failure to compromise by the board of trustees, a failure of prudence and imagination. At first glance, the victim of this obduracy is Charles Curran; in reality, the victims are the university and the church.

On April 12, 1988, the trustees of the university removed Curran's canonical mission to teach in an ecclesiastical faculty. The board also said that this action did not remove his tenure at the university and it directed the university's chancellor, then-Archbishop James A. Hickey, the university's president, the Reverend William Byron, S.J., and the chairman of the board, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, to discuss with Curran "an alternative teaching assignment within an area of his professional competence." The possibility of a judicious compromise seemed at hand. There are other departments at CU which do not require the canonical mission, and Curran was willing to move to one of them. Indeed, he was willing to accept a position in the sociology department as a professor of Christian social ethics, and he was willing to refrain from teaching in the controverted area of sexual ethics. What he was not willing to do—and what the university's three-man committee insisted upon—was to sign a statement agreeing not to teach Catholic theology, the breach of which would be cause for dismissal. To accede, he said, would have been a denial of who he is and what he is trained to teach, and—although he did not say so—would have invited a witch hunt.

The university's claim to have made Curran a fair offer—and to have respected its own commitment to academic freedom—hangs on a fragile distinction between Christian social ethics and theology. The distinction simply can't bear the weight. Exactly what would Curran the Christian social ethicist say in class that Curran the moral theologian would not—or vice versa?

Behind this delicate argument lurk two cruder realities. First, as long as the university maintains that it can respect Curran's tenure with an appropriate post somewhere in the university but extends the Vatican's stricture against Curran's teaching theology beyond Vatican-accredited programs to the entire university, then Catholic University is equivocating. Certainly, life has its equivocations. The problem is that Catholic University's three-man committee wants Curran to take this equivocation for his own, to bear all its burden and to take all the risk. This he rightly refuses to do.

The second problem is cruder still. The university has committed itself to a power play. Nowhere is this clearer than in the loyalty oath that the committee demanded of Curran. What it sought was no mere practical arrangement but a psychological and moral victory—to make Curran say "uncle," and thereby validate, in this matter,

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the authority of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Curran now intends to proceed with his civil suit charging the university with breach of his tenure contract. It is easy to imagine that the main loser in all this is Charles Curran. But the main losers are actually Catholic University and the church.

For many years, Catholic University has met the criteria of academic freedom—and for most of its faculty, undoubtedly still does. Academic freedom, however, is not simply a protection against routine abuses. It is supposed to operate in precisely those exceptional cases when special pressure is exerted from outside the university community to silence unwelcome views. In the Curran case, CU has failed the test.

But the greatest loser is the church itself. It is a church trapped between those who, on the one hand, do not really understand the church of Christ's need for continuing reformation and self-correction, and those who, on the other hand, will surrender that process to the shifting moods of the day. Charles Curran has charted a responsible course between these unhappy alternatives, not the only possible course, but one which should be honored rather than despised.

Chesterton wrote that orthodoxy was a whirling adventure. What the leadership of Catholic University has done is, at worst, to discourage that adventure, at best, to exile it to other institutions that do not give Catholic tradition so prominent a presence. Some think Charles Curran should now accept the situation and depart gracefully. It is the mark of his gracefulness that he has refused to do so. The Curran case is not simply a struggle for the vindication of an individual's tenure rights or even an institution's academic freedom. It is a struggle for the sake of the church itself.

In keeping with Commonweal's usual summer schedule, only one issue is published each month during July and August. The next issue published will be dated July 15.

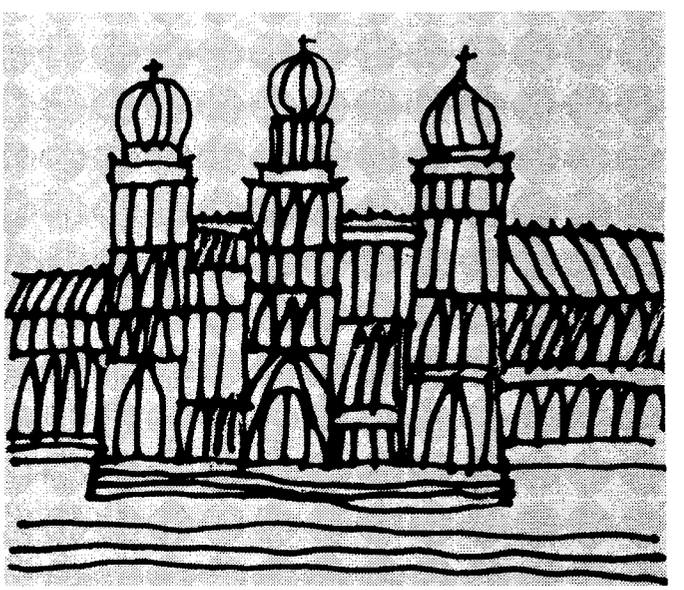
A THOUSAND YEARS

How long is a thousand years? In God's sight, but as a watch in the night. At least so says the psalmist. Gleb Yakunin, a Russian Orthodox priest, has known many such nights. He served nine years in prison for protesting Soviet antireligious policies. (He was released last year.) Yet when he was asked to speak before President Reagan at Spaso House last month during the Moscow Summit, the comparison he chose to make was between the short, seventy-year hiatus of Soviet atheism and the millennial celebration this month of the birth of Christianity in the lands of the Ukraine and the present-day Soviet Union. The juxtaposition was telling. Yakunin is not only a dissident; he is a patient man. He is familiar with the ancient liturgical chant: *Vidite vy grob i urazumeite/Spas bo voskrese ot groba*. (Look at the tomb and understand/The Savior has risen!)

Despite recent signs of growing tolerance for matters religious under Gorbachev's leadership, the Soviet Union does not abide by its obligations in this area under such formal agreements as the UN Declaration of Human Rights. The antireligious laws of 1929 are still in effect, the persecutions of Stalin and Khruschev still strong in believers' memories. It is the state alone that looses and binds in policies religious. Believers are discriminated against in education, the army, the workplace. They cannot attain positions of responsibility in the Communist party or in society in general. Places of worship, even in officially approved bodies such as the Russian Orthodox church, can be closed at the government's will. Other churches are simply outlawed. The Ukrainian Catholic church has operated as a "church in the catacombs" since Stalin liquidated it in 1946. Today, Ukrainian Catholics cannot openly celebrate their millennium, educate their children in the Catholic faith, ordain clergy, or copy religious materials. The stone remains yet to be rolled back.

Approved bodies, such as the Lithuanian Catholic church and the Russian Orthodox church itself, know similar restrictions. Stanislovas Muraukas, a Lithuanian Catholic, is presently serving a three-year sentence for printing religious postcards. Vladimir Rusak, a deacon in the Orthodox church, was sentenced in 1987 to seven years in a labor camp for having complained to the World Council of Churches about state intrusion in the Orthodox church. Soviet Religious Affairs Minister Konstantine Kharchev said in April that present Soviet religious laws are unlikely to change.

But notwithstanding such laws and even outright persecution, the vitality of religious faith—whether it be Jewish, Muslim, or Christian—is clearly evident today in the Soviet Union. It has attained a force that can no longer be simply vanquished by the government's will. In the last year over eight thousand Ukrainians have openly petitioned the Supreme Soviet to legalize the Ukrainian Catholic church, an act of remarkable daring. The young poet, Irina Ratushinskya—



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released from prison herself on the eve of the Reykjavik Summit—has indicated why such a resurgence has taken hold. "For some reason, I was never able to accept the Soviet religion," she writes, "although I knew no other." Then, she adds, "God himself found me."

It was another poet, the great Pasternak, who wrote in 1949 that "the centuries will float out of the night like a string of barges toward the Judgment." The millennial celebration of Christianity in the lands of the Soviet Union should remind our times that the night can pass, and that with our effort the barges can yet float steadily toward the dawn.

ET CETERA

DOWNWARD CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS A correspondent friend who covers Central America recently brought us up to date on events in El Salvador. Much of the conversation dealt with the current state of the Christian Democratic party.

Like the medical prognosis recently handed down to Salvadoran President José Napoleón Duarte, the situation of the Christian Democrats, of whom Duarte is the head, is not a good one. The country remains at civil war. In March, the Christian Democrats suffered a stunning electoral defeat at the hands of the right-wing ARENA party. Not only did they lose control of the National Assembly, but, for the first time in twenty-four years, they failed to maintain the mayoralty of San Salvador. Their hold on the capital had served them well, particularly in 1984 when the ARENA presidential candidate won ten of the country's fourteen provinces but failed to carry San Salvador and lost the election. Such a turn of events in the future is less likely with the capital in ARENA hands.

Things appear less promising still for the Christian Democrats when one considers the deep fissures in the party. Our friend described the bitter rivalry betwen Julio Adolfo Rey Prendes and Fidel Chavez Mena for the party's presidential nomination. At a party convention in April, the ailing Duarte called on both to step aside in behalf of party unity. On national TV he declared that the party was being torn apart from within. Neither man budged. On the contrary, Duarte's own vice-president and now acting president, Rudolfo Antonio Castillo Claramount, was hooted out of the convention. Duarte's more recent appeals are likely to penetrate just about as deeply.

The vote against the Christian Democrats in March was a *voto de castigo*, a "vote of punishment" against the party for its ineptitude and corruption. Unless it can get its house in order before the presidential election next March, the vote is likely to go against it in the same way. Clearly, however, an ARENA victory will not end the hostilities in El Salvador. The civil war is likely to grow more intense from all sides as room diminishes for political initiative and compromise. According to our friend, there is no end in sight for the hostilities. The same cannot be said of the future of the Christian Democrats. The more they bicker, the fewer their days.

A REPORT FROM THE MAIN LINE

WHO BUILDS GOD'S HOUSE?
ARCHITECTURE & ECCLESIOLOGY

At the time I left the Catholic church and formally joined a Protestant congregation in the late 1960s, there was considerable grass-roots enthusiasm for Catholic and Protestant dialogue and shared action. The fervor had been ignited by the love, humanity, and openness of Pope John XXIII and fueled by the pent-up desire of both groups of Christians to let down barriers and work together. Since then, that fervor has cooled significantly. Catholics have gone back to talking to themselves in their own unique lexicon, and Protestants have gone back to doing their own thing. We have forgotten how to talk to each other in terms we can both understand. And no one seems to care.

A reminder of this sorry state of affairs came to me recently through my participation in one of the most traditional of Protestant periodic rituals—a building campaign. Our congregation had approved and pledged funds for a plan to enlarge our facilities to provide some badly needed additional classroom and common space. I had volunteered to be a member of the Building Committee because of my position as chairman of the church trustees (Buildings and Grounds Committee) and some construction trade knowledge.

It had not occurred to the committee that our little project would be considered such a plum. After all, we had estimated that the proposed improvement would cost about $500,000, a considerable sum for our small congregation, but not a very big job in the current construction market. So we were surprised by both the number and enthusiasm of responses we had to our solicitation for architects.

Working from a list prepared by one of our group, we had sent letters to about a dozen Philadelphia-area architects. The letters asked for written proposals covering a broad list of evaluation criteria felt relevant by the committee, including a description of similar projects the architects had worked on, specific experiences with our township's zoning and building regulations, experience with a construction-manager approach to contracting, fee structure, and equal-opportunity employment practices. Our letters also included some preliminary drawings and sketches made by one of the committee members. These had been used as the basis for the preliminary cost estimate and as major selling tools for our successful building campaign.

We received seven proposals, most responding to our letter point by point. Several included detailed drawings of similar projects. We conducted a formal review and evaluation of each response, and decided to interview four firms, after which a

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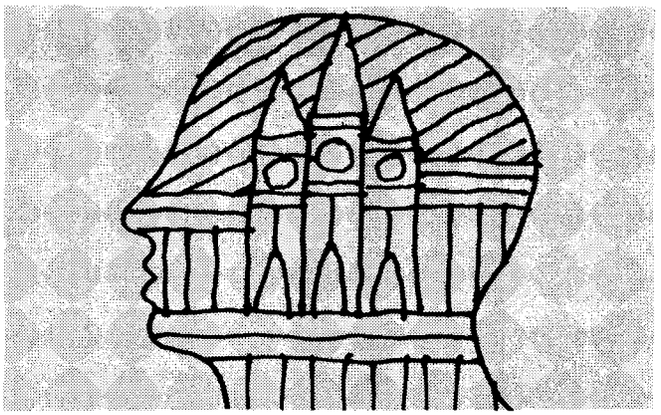

final selection would be made. As it turned out, we inadvertently ended up with an ecumenical mix: one firm with extensive Protestant church experience, one with mainly Catholic church experience, one with some Protestant church and other relevant experience, and one firm (Jewish name, assumed to be Jewish) with extensive institutional and commercial experience.

The interviews took place on two consecutive weekday nights, with each architectural firm allotted an hour and a half to present its case. We asked that each firm bring the person who would be responsible for our project, in addition to slides and pictures of recent projects.

It was during these interviews that the committee learned why these architects prized our job so highly. For one thing, our prestigious Philadelphia Main Line address would certainly look good on their résumés. For another, the prominent location of our church on a major thoroughfare in the heart of town would make the new addition to our church a highly visible advertisement of their skills and accomplishments. And, finally, there was the technical challenge of the job itself, which required an architectural blending and physical merging of a hundred-year-old stone church structure with a thirty-year-old stucco education building, with several different, mismatched levels. All of the candidates made it very clear that ours was a job that they would give their eyeteeth to have.

As the interviews progressed, the committees began to get a feel for the style and approach of the different firms. All were relatively small in terms of size and staff, and their character seemed to be shaped by the principal, who was generally the one doing the talking during the interview. Judging by the slides that were shown by each group, they all had some very impressive projects to their credit. Any of these four, we felt, could do our job justice.

When it came down to the final vote, however, we ended up selecting the firm with the extensive Protestant church experience. The choice was obvious and unanimous. This firm had recently completed an impressive new sanctuary building for a neighboring Protestant congregation. In checking with this church, we found that they had nothing but high praise for their new building, the manner in which the architects worked with the congregation and the builder, and the way they shepherded the project through the maze of *two* township bureaucracies amid opposition from some of the church's neighbors. The firm also had a good working relationship with a construction firm who happened to be our first choice for construction manager. During the interview, leadership of the firm's presentation and discussion passed easily back and forth between the two partners, one of whom had been identified as prospective manager of our project.

But most important, the architects seemed to be very sensitive to who we were as a Christian congregation and the fact that we would be trying, with our new addition, to express that identity to ourselves and the community. All things considered, they were the ones that the committee felt were most capable of working with us and the congregation to come up with a design for our new addition, and then working effectively with a contractor to convert that design to brick and mortar reality.

Although the rational Protestant part of me fully concurs with our committee's choice, there is another part of me, the former Catholic, that regrets not having chosen the Catholic entrants. Their accomplishments and technical competence were very impressive, and they were very well connected in our township. We could have easily selected them with the confident expectation of a fine job. But more important, we would have been creating an opportunity for bringing in some insights from another religious tradition that might have enriched us. And maybe, just maybe, the architects might have learned something from us that would, in turn, enrich their work for their Catholic clients.

But the opportunity was not taken, and for reasons that are more complicated than simple anti-Catholic prejudice. An underlying feeling that pervaded our interview with the Catholic firm was the impression that they really didn't understand us. For the architect-owner (who did *all* the talking), there was a constant struggle not to use words like "priest," "parish," and "Mass" when discussing our project. Often it appeared that either he didn't know or was not comfortable with the Protestant counterpart words. None of the other architects had this problem.

Also, the slides of some of his church work reflected a certain sameness, especially with respect to sanctuary design. All showed an emphasis on the altar, with lighting effects that suggested God's presence emanating from on high and flowing from the priest-celebrant to the congregation. This is a concept right in tune with conservative Catholic liturgy and religious perspective, but very much different from our Protestant view which puts more emphasis on God working through the people. It was certainly at odds with our still-unformed concept for our new narthex space, which we would like to reflect our church as a community of God's people, reaching out to our local neighborhood and the world.

The "Catholic" notion of power flowing from God through the clergy to the receiving congregation was reinforced later during the discussion. As an example of his ability to work with the congregation, the architect related an anecdote about a recent commission. The Archdiocese of Philadelphia, against the will of the people of the parish, had decided to raze and

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rebuild an antiquated, but historic church. One of his tasks as architect was to help sell the new building to the stubborn and vocal holdouts. His point in telling the anecdote was that he was willing and able to stand up and take the heat when it might be necessary to communicate unpopular decisions made by authority figures to a skeptical congregation. Unfortunately, what we were looking for was the indication of his willingness to be open to input from our always vocal but sometimes frustratingly democratic congregation. The imposing of solutions from the top is not our style. The unspoken message we got from all of this was that the Catholic architect really didn't understand what we were about, our concept of religion, or what we were striving for in our new space.

The problem, however, did not lie exclusively with him. It is fair to say that our group was not exactly open to new interfaith initiatives. Interfaith understanding was not one of the evaluation criteria we had established for selection of an architect, nor was it ever brought up during any of our committee discussions. The one mention made of this architect's predominantly Catholic building experience was in a negative context, questioning whether his experience would be suitable background for our specific Protestant tradition.

Upon reflection, that concern was indicative of just how much more insular and provincial our congregation has become with respect to interfaith activities, including our relationships with other local Protestant churches. It is ironic in that we consider ourselves to be a risking congregation. We pride ourselves on our openness, inclusiveness, and proactive stands on the moral issues of the day, such as minority rights, women's rights, homosexuality, disarmament, and Central American policy. Yet, on the issue of interfaith relations we have tended of late to put our priorities with *our* denomination, *our* seminary, and *our* college. It is hard to believe that we are the same group of people who on an Easter Sunday ten years ago marched down the street to the local Catholic church to hand out balloons to share our celebration of the Risen Christ with the nonplussed parishioners as they came out of Mass.

So, the net result of all this is that when our final committee vote was tallied, the Catholic firm ended up lower in the rankings, and we had chosen an architect we could be sure spoke our language. Too bad. These days grassroots-level opportunities for Catholics and Protestants to work together and learn from each other don't come along that often. Maybe somebody should take the initiative to create some new opportunities. Maybe we should all pray for a new John XXIII.

JOSEPH P. SPAMPINATO

Joseph P. Spampinato is an engineering executive in an aerospace company in Pennsylvania.

OF SEVERAL MINDS John Garvey

PLANETARY INFLUENCES

WHEN YOU WISH UPON A STAR

Every now and then I encounter something which makes me feel that the universe is a much sillier, and therefore much more congenial, place than I usually imagine it to be. These encounters often take the form of unexpected exchanges with strangers. A woman came up to me recently in the laundromat, grinning, and said, "Sam?"

"No; John."

"But you have a *dog* named Sam." She was firm about this.

"I don't have a dog."

She left, looking puzzled and a little resentful, and said, over her shoulder, "I know I've seen you someplace." That was a nice moment, but not as good as the hot evening a man came to my door carrying a large box tied with a ribbon, made into a bow at the top. He was wearing a T-shirt and had on a cap with a long bill. When I walked over to the screen door he said, "Mr. Tinkle? About rabbits?" A few days later a man who lived a few houses away, someone I had never met, stuck his head through a hole in the hedge and said, "My name's Tinkle. Do you like rutabagas?"

Discussions about life's meaning very seldom take moments like this into account. James Thurber did, though, and so have other humorists. Humor is a hole in any picture we want to have of the world, and it is spiritually important. But whatever that spiritual importance is, it is ruined by trying to talk about it, other than to say that humor gives a better sense of real human scale than anything else I can think of. Brueghel's *Landscape with Fall of Icarus* could be the most important painting in the Western world, from a spiritual point of view. The world goes on about all its labors as Icarus plunges into the water, tiny and more or less irrelevant. The romantic era was a definite step down from the view of life which could produce this vision.

Sometimes it is not the unexpected exchange with strangers which produces a sense of delight in the absurdity of things. News items can do it too. My favorite recent story is, of course, the revelation of the Reagans' interest in astrology. I enjoyed seeing the issue wrestled with on *PTL Club*, which is still trying to recover from Jim and Tammy Bakker and, if God is just, will be off the airwaves forever before too long. The editor of a newspaper which gives "the Christian point of view"—there being only one of those, apparently—was asked what he thought of it all, and said that Ronald Reagan had done a lot to bring about a return to "traditional moral values" and he was very grateful for Reagan's presidency, but he hoped that

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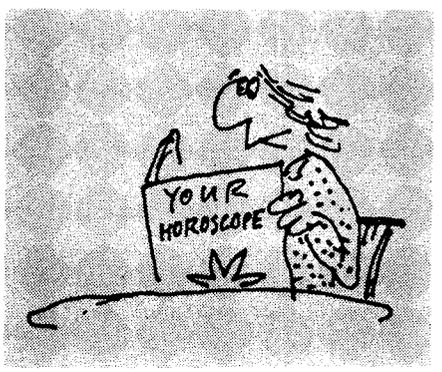
someone like Billy Graham would sit down with the Reagans and explain that astrology was forbidden to Christians because it is "of the occult." Humorists and cartoonists have had a great time poking fun, and comparisons have been made between Nancy Reagan's astrologer friend and the last czarina's friend, Rasputin.

I happen to have moved from absolute skepticism to a certain agnosticism, where astrology is concerned. Once I was at a party where a woman I had been introduced to before told me that she believed there was something to astrology; this belief came as the result of an impressive astrologer she had met. She was a bright person, not at all a credulous type. I said, "All right: you know me a little, but you don't know when I was born. What's my sign?" She guessed Taurus, and was right. I was surprised, but not stunned. "You've also met Regina," I said. "What's her sign?" She guessed Aquarius, and was right once more. Now this wasn't the sort of person who does parlor tricks or who wanted to establish a reputation as someone with weird powers. She didn't know my wife or me well enough to know our birthdays. The odds against doing what she was able to do are impressive, if it's all a matter of lucky guesses. I am prepared to admit that there may be something to the possibility that certain symbol-systems can unlock the abilities of some people to see interesting and true things (the patterns having to do with what Jung was getting at when he wrote, in his usual vague way, about synchronicity), though I am not prepared to attribute magic to cards or a determining influence on our lives to the alignments of stars and planets as seen from earth. This is only to say that the reasoning we associate with the scientific method, with observable cause-and-effect, is not sufficient to explain a lot of what we can know. Not only humor, but also this sort of thing, can teach us that Western deductive logic is limited.

My reaction to my friend's astrological accuracy was that it was interesting, but so what? Even if this stuff does bear some relationship to reality, it isn't terribly compelling in any case. You can also judge personality traits and beliefs by facial characteristics; first impressions are often correct. (A case in point: haven't you noticed that some fundamentalists smile the same way Jimmy Swaggart used to?) A local radio show features an astrologer who is so lame at her trade that she speaks of "suspicious" (rather than "auspicious") signs, but she has a list of people whose birthdays fall on any given day, and it was interesting to me that Maureen O'Sullivan and the Ayatollah Khomeini share a birthday. So do Queen Victoria and Bob Dylan. Whatever thin generalizations can be derived from that are hardly worth staking anything on. There are people like the Amazing Randi (an atheistic magician who has done some service debunking a lot of occult nonsense) who seem too threatened by this; they suffer from what Kierkegaard called "an over-belief in the truth."

Astrology columns are not nearly the threat to our sanity that ordinary commercials are. It is probably less harmful to believe an astrology column than it is to believe that buying the right soup mix or insurance policy will make your family love you, or that voting for the right presidential candidate will make much of a difference to the future of the nation. The scientific method is stretched beyond reasonable bounds by astrology, but it is bypassed completely by our commercial and political culture.

It is amusing to think that a man as empty as President Reagan has plotted any part of his life (or, consistent with his style everywhere else, allowed his life to be plotted) in this gossamer and silly way. There are rumors that people as diverse as Cory Aquino, Indira Gandhi, and Winston Churchill have indulged in the same superstition. What makes our laughter at the Reagan situation a little more nervous is that there is not much indication that his life is guided by anything more solid than astrology. If it were an odd, eccentric seasoning on something more substantial, it would strike us as less alarming than the possibility that it may be the most solid thing on his platter, God help us all.



"You will travel, meet people and ban intermediate-range nuclear missiles."

Looking at all this I take comfort in a memory from childhood. There was a comic book I liked which featured a little wizard with a beard, who wore a tall cap covered with moons and stars. One picture of him snoozing away made me feel cozy, as if everything in the world were ordered and in place. It is nice to think that President Reagan may have a similar warm feeling about things. All is made well by this addled but amiable approach to life: nothing that goes wrong is ever your fault. Perhaps this is why politicians (and their mates) are inclined to believe in astrology and divination, from Caesar's day to the present. In any event, the final wisdom on this comes from Shakespeare's *King Lear*, act 1, scene 2, where Edmund says,

> "This is the excellent foppery of the world, that when we are sick in fortune, often the surfeits of our own behavior, we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and stars; as if we were villains on necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance; drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on. An admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition on the charge of a star. My father compounded with my mother under the Dragon's Tail, and my nativity was under Ursa Major, so it follows that I am rough and lecherous. Fut! I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing." □

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SEXISM, SIN, & GRACE

RESPONSES TO THE BISHOPS' LETTER

What do the bishops want? More discussion. The first draft of *Partners in the Mystery of Redemption: A Pastoral Response to Women's Concerns for Church and Society* was released on April 12 this year for discussion and further consultation. Dioceses, organizations, and individuals have been invited to comment. *Commonweal* did so in an editorial, "You've come a long way, bishops! . . . You still have a long way to go" (April 22, 1988). The discussion continues in our pages with six commentators who were asked: first, to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the present draft and, second, to suggest improvements, deletions, and additions. The bishops, too, have a chance to respond at their bi-annual meeting, Collegeville, Minnesota, June 24-27. A new draft will then be prepared and a final version will be presented to the full body of bishops at their November 1989 meeting.

JANE REDMONT

has also written a commentary on the pastoral's first draft for the Sunday Boston Globe. *For the past two years she has been at work on a book about American Catholic women.*

The best thing, of course, is that they listened to us—at least those of us who showed up. The first draft of *Partners* is above all a testimony to a conversion process: the bishops pay attention not only to the experience of women, but to their own isolation from this experience. The introduction acknowledges "the helplessness of minority women trapped in a cycle of crushing poverty, the exhaustion of mothers trying to maintain a family, a home, and outside employment, the frustration of intelligent women being stereotyped as emotional and incapable . . . the anguish of women who have wide ranging spiritual and intellectual gifts that could be of service to the church, but who are not afforded the chance to use it." After this enumeration, one can almost hear the bishops say, in hushed voices, "We had no idea."

I did not have high expectations for the pastoral. I was pleasantly surprised by some parts of it and reduced to sighs and groans by others. I cheered the bishops' statement that men too are responsible for the care of children. I am glad they understand that women's work is often undervalued, be it mothering, painting houses, sewing hems, or performing surgery. I respect the bishops' careful acknowledgment of the diversity among Catholic women. I am pleased the bishops called sexism a sin. It is. I hope their statement will lead people to consider the evils of sexism rather than to devalue the currency of the word "sin."

I groaned when the bishops tiptoed. "Consulting with women on matters pertaining to birth control will contribute to church teaching on sexuality. Women's experience will lead to the formulation of a better policy," the bishops write. One wants to ask: "How so? How soon? How much? Did any of us give you any good ideas about this? Would you care to name them? Could we please stop using circumlocutions?"

When one reads the carefully worded pastoral in the perspective of past Roman Catholic history—with the same eye for nuance and subtle change one brings to a diplomatic release from the Kremlin or the State Department—the bishops' discussion of ordination of women to the diaconate is a milestone. When one reads it in the light of contemporary reality, the talk about the permanent diaconate seems ludicrous: many women engaged in pastoral ministry already have the wisdom, the training, the experience, and the gifts to be bishops.

I hope the bishops will keep stressing questions of process. In the past decade, they have strengthened their belief in dialogue and consultation. The pastoral on women's concerns marks a new stage in this development, with its attention to the personal and collective experience of women. I am not sure whether the bishops will acknowledge the influence of feminist and liberation theologies upon their method of reflection; it is visible in their attention to experience as a basis for theological reflection and in their realization that this reflection must lead to profound communal change. They are not, strictly speaking, doing liberation theology, but beginning to engage in what Sister Marie Augusta Neal has called the counterpart to liberation theology: a theology of relinquish-

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ment. How far will the bishops have the courage to carry this kind of reflection? Future drafts of the pastoral will give us an indication, but only the life of the church in the next decade will give us an answer.

Finally—this will seem deceptively simple—I want the bishops to talk about friendship. Friendship: the most universal and accessible of relationships, which can bind any one of us to any other, regardless of age, gender, race, sexual preference, physical ability, or socio-economic class. In this relationship, two human beings—or a group of them—can experience genuine emotional and spiritual intimacy, whether or not the relationship also includes sexual intimacy. Friendship sustains women's lives—in neighborliness in local communities, in the women's movement, in relationships with men.

The word "friendship" appears nowhere in the draft, even in the section entitled "Partners in Relationship." The word "friend" appears once, tucked away in Section 193, in the "Partners in the Church" section: "women are saddened and hurt . . . when priests see them as sexual and/or professional threats rather than as potential friends, colleagues, and coworkers." The point is well taken, but friendship belongs everywhere in this document, especially in the section on relationships. I want the bishops to honor friendship and call it sacred, to give it not an ancillary place but a fundamental one.

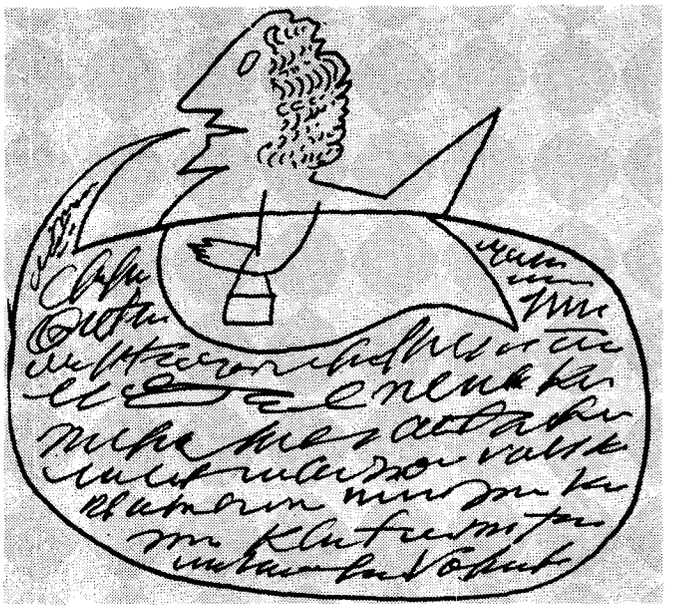
This is no sentimental, privatistic request. To lift up friendship as the standard against which to measure other relationships is a profoundly political act and a religious one as well. "I no longer call you slaves," Jesus is said to have told his companions, "rather, I call you friends." With these words, the Gospel challenges our understanding of both power and holiness. Both divine and human reality look different. Surely this has implications for the lives of women. □

MARYLEE MITCHAM

is a nurse and the author of An Accidental Monk: Her Domestic Search for God.

Sometimes I feel about the church the way Mae West felt about marriage—it's a great institution, but I'm not ready for an institution. Actually, it *is* a great institution, and *Partners in the Mystery of Redemption* is an impressive draft, polished enough to be final, if not perfect.

In the first place, it is highly readable. For all its length it's never boring, even the footnotes, and it effectively conveys the sound of a single pastoral voice worthy of partnership with women. What this says to me is that the committee of bishops was virtuous enough to produce something *whole*, not a mean feat and one, no doubt, that numerous women consultants and staff helped them accomplish. The document's format is creative and original, and it is there, particularly, that I sense a female contribution. Admittedly, the bishops have thrown in the kitchen sink, but because they did it so eloquently, with such economy of motion, one can refer to the pastoral's



breadth of vision. Once approved, I hope this pastoral is widely read and absorbed in all parishes because it offers a refreshed view of leadership. All of us, women and men, laity and clerics, have sexist stereotypes to question and throw out.

Others know, I don't, how this draft is likely to be received by the entire body of bishops. Mulling that over, I went from busily conceiving minor additions that could be made to a sudden fear that there might be wholesale deletions, a disturbing thought. Since practicing invasive medicine on a patient who's already recovering is to risk new, iatrogenic disease, I suggest treating this draft like a friend who is well enough for discharge, a dear friend who nearly died, but didn't.

And now, four very miscellaneous comments on the text:

- Ironically, the bishops so convincingly witnessed to the truth that women are disciples in the fullest sense of the word, that I was inadvertently converted to the belief that it's only a matter of time until "the mind of Christ" changes in regard to women's ordination. Without sounding flippant, may I suggest that anyone who's fully man is allowed to change his mind; and anyone who's fully God knows the right moment.
- It's unfortunate that "offering it up" has apparently become a cynical phrase that really suggests backing down or caving in. That is how it functions in a quote from an abused woman in the pastoral. It's hard to think of anything more spiritually profound than uniting one's own suffering with Christ's, but women apparently can't hear that from men, although another woman might be able to suggest it, as I do now. The whole dilemma is sad.
- As a current resident of Puerto Rico—where the population, although U.S. in citizenship, is not within the jurisdiction of the United States bishops—I was recently denied Communion in the hand. This allowed me to reflect on our status as a world church and the need to keep various agendas in perspective since we worship and move as one body.

I find the scene in Puerto Rico hard to sort out. There appears to be considerable sexism, yet the women here are

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models of strength and fervor. I almost feel I'm living in a matriarchal society.

• Is it superfluous to add that most women who are free of grave circumstances experience a need for beauty, quiet time, and rich reading material? But they feel guilty about this need, as though they don't deserve these good things. This is especially true of lay women. In an activist society we all need the contemplative dimension, lest, anxious and upset about many things, we stumble over the stern words of the Magnificat, which as a church we are privileged to say. □

MARY C. SEGERS

is associate professor of political science at Rutgers University and Henry Luce Fellow in theology at Harvard Divinity School. She is co-author of Elusive Equality: Liberalism, Affirmative Action, and Social Change in America *(Associated Faculty Press).*

It is difficult to regard the bishops' draft pastoral on women's concerns as making any major contribution to the endless struggle against the oppression of women in contemporary society. This is a conventional church document which endorses equal pay, flextime, affirmative action, child-care policies, and pay equity. The draft is strong in its condemnation of sexism as sinful. Yet it is thin in its analysis of the roots of sexism in society, and pays insufficient attention to ways in which a male-dominated church reproduces the sexism of the larger culture. The pastoral rightly records women's expressions of alienation. It notes the pain and bitterness experienced by many women over *Humanae vitae* and their exclusion from discussions and decisions leading to the evolution of moral teachings that govern their reproductive lives. Yet this portrayal of women's victimization invites pity and neglects the many achievements of American women which evoke pride.

The bishops' pastoral inevitably invites comparison with two previous major statements of the 1980s on war and peace (1983) and on the economy (1986). Take, for example, *Economic Justice for All: Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy*. The title of this pastoral is stately and magisterial, suggesting the importance with which the bishops regarded their task. The topic is important, the scope is grand, the bishops address secular society as well as fellow Catholics on the subject of economic justice. By contrast, *Partners in the Mystery of Redemption: A Pastoral Response to Women's Concerns for Church and Society* sounds trite and bland; moreover, it suggests that the injustice and oppression experienced by many women in contemporary America belong to the category of "women's concerns"—when, instead, sexism—like racism—is, or should be, a concern of *all* persons, male and female.

Then there is the process by which the bishops have written their 1980s' pastorals. In preparing this new statement, the bishops heard testimony from twenty-four Catholic women's organizations; they also received feedback from a hundred American dioceses, which conducted listening sessions for women to express their thoughts and feelings. Note that the bishops elected to consult *only Catholic women* about women's concerns; this is in marked contrast to the economic and nuclear pastorals in which the NCCB consulted a wide variety of experts, regardless of their religious affiliations. Thirty-six specialists testified on issues of war and peace; over a hundred economists, labor leaders, corporate managers, theologians, and researchers were consulted for the economics pastoral. The bishops addressed these major statements to secular society as well as to Catholics. Even their 1979 pastoral on racism was addressed to American society as a whole. However, in addressing sex discrimination, the bishops speak only to the church and consult only Catholics, excluding many persons working for social justice in the women's movement over the last twenty-five years. Why the difference? What do the bishops fear?

One of the more disturbing aspects of this letter relates to things left unsaid or unacknowledged. For example, the bishops rightly claim their teaching on sexuality and divorce is counter-cultural. Yet they fail to see that on issues of social justice, the women's movement has been prophetic and counter-cultural while the church has sought to protect a sexist status quo. Most of us have learned about gender equality and justice from our sisters outside the church. Even Catholic feminists are ignored by the bishops in this letter. If the church wishes to dialogue honestly with American women and American society, it should acknowledge in fairness that it has learned from Theresa Kane, Mary Daly, Eleanor Smeal, Rosemary Ruether, Agnes Mary Mansour, the Vatican 24, Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, Geraldine Ferraro, Arlene Violet, Mary Hunt, Liz Morancy, Barbara Mikulski, Carol Coston, and the countless others "who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith."

What draft revisions would I suggest?

• Change the title of the pastoral to reflect the bishops' firm conviction that sexism is a moral and global problem of staggering proportions, adversely affecting half of humanity. Insist that policymakers give top priority to remedies for sexism in all its forms. A new title might be: *Liberty and Justice for All: A Pastoral Letter on Sexism in Society and in the Church*.

• Eliminate the word "Partners" from the text. Slaves and slave owners were partners on the ante-bellum plantation, yet they were hardly equal. A good substitute might be "Colleagues," which connotes relations of equality and mutual respect.

• Shorten the section on sexuality in chapter two, and invite lay women to develop a practical theology of marriage.

• The NCCB Pro-Life Committee should be strongly encouraged to give top priority to the issue of violence against women in its many forms. By working to improve the status of women, the NCCB may actually reduce incentives to resort to abortion.

• Strongly encourage the introduction of women's studies programs in all seminaries and novitiates and in Catholic

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colleges and universities, so that the fruits of twenty years of new scholarship on gender may be made available to all. □

EMILIE GRIFFIN

author of Turning: Reflections on the Experience of Conversion, *and a writer and consultant on the creative and analytical aspects of marketing, is an M.A. candidate in theology at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans.*

"I know why the caged bird sings." These words of Maya Angelou fluttered through my mind as I leafed through the pages of the bishops' pastoral response to the concerns of women and society. Despite its fuzzy topic sentences and its lack of clear focus, the letter manifests a confessional brilliance which is startling. To read it is to hear a thousand voices of liberation rising, sweet birds of freedom calling out for release.

For the bishops have heard these womanly voices crying. Beginning with the clarion call of *Gaudium et spes* for fundamental rights to be honored, the bishops acknowledged their past insensitivities with regard to women, declaring that "anyone who ventures to speak to people about justice must first be just in their eyes." Do the bishops express contrition? Yes. And it is one of the hard reasons why this document must be taken seriously. Women's tussles for position as reflected in the draft are less reassuring. Some women respondents have stereotyped the roles of lector and parish council member, while demeaning those of food server and sacristan. The picture, therefore, seems somewhat unflattering, when one recalls that all roles are appropriate to servanthood, whether male or female.

The framers of the pastoral urge us not to rip their sentences or statements out of context; to do so would mislead. They want us to view the draft as a whole, to reflect and respond. Their desire is to learn from women and be responsive to their concerns.

Who gave the bishops leave to comment? Who asked them? Where did they develop the audacity—nay, arrogance—to tell us women who we are and where we are going? What motives lie underneath the hem of their text? Are they violating our boundaries when they presume to tell us women who we are? These, no doubt are the questions that would be voiced by any hermeneutic of suspicion. But what of a hermeneutic of trust?

In this first draft these bishops of ours speak to us as partners in personhood. But how do they speak? First, by listening. Their attention is on us women as we affirm who we are. Our voices are raised as we speak of dignity created by God, our gifts and talents, our efforts to resist exploitation, our desire to be fully free.

They have listened, too, to our voices of alienation: lack of recognition, and the sin of sexism; they have heard us reflect on our heritage of equality before God, our inheritance of sin and redemption. They have stated their own response: that sexism is a moral and social evil; that women's contributions ought to be acknowledged; that masculine and feminine gifts must be brought together, interwoven, harmonized.

For me, the greatest values of the draft are its rejection of aggression, power, dominance, and control; its awareness of the double messages being sent to women by society, with a commitment to lead us through these challenges safely; its pinpointing of the "Eve syndrome" that has created such turbulence in relations between men and women; its proper focus on the sacramental meaning of commitment; its tender grasp of the joy of motherhood.

Another value for me is the scriptural espousal of our humanity. Humans, it is clear, are to glorify God in their bodies. Human sexuality is a positive good. This in itself is progress, a new channeling of our resources of mind and body toward personal and communal freedom. Sexuality has broken the bonds of "patent-leather occasions of sin." Instead, a freer understanding makes intimacy possible within the framework of discipline and self-control.

I am less comfortable with the document's implied vision of justice, only because the bishops have failed to state sharply and with precision what they mean by economic freedom and justice for all. It's clear that efficiency and competition are a two-edged sword. Turned against our hearts they can destroy us, so we must grapple with them. But what precisely our shepherds are proposing with regard to transformation of the social order is less than clear. Jesus, surely, was a person who broke through barriers. Doubtless the bishops are intending a similar shattering. They promise us an examination of the modes of acting, accumulating possessions, and lifestyles found within the church itself, and this is refreshing. But more than mere promises will be needed to bridge the troubled waters of our disenchantment. There is hope, perhaps, in the idea of a revisionist Mary: underprivileged, poor, walking in darkness. But it's hard to see the way. □

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN

is professor of political science at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She grew up a Lutheran in a small Colorado town.

The number of responses the bishops garnered as preparation for composing the first draft of their pastoral on women's concerns is enough to make the average social scientist turn green with envy—or collapse with exhaustion at the prospect of organizing mountains of material. Seventy-five thousand women offered their views on women in church and society. In addition, the bishops received responses from a hundred dioceses, sixty college campuses, and forty-five military bases. How to present such material? Rather than simply summarizing reactions, or, even worse, reducing complex reflections to simplistic numbers, the bishops resort to a *sic et non* hermeneutic as they play the "voices of affirmation" off against the "voices of alienation." They require of them-

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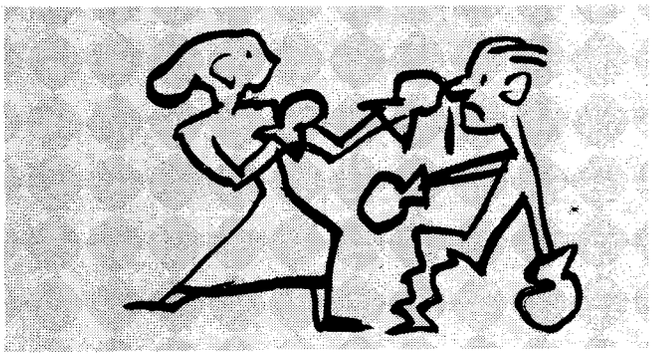

selves, and the reader, that he or she "listen" to these diverse voices. Constructing an interpretive dialogue, even as one affirms many received norms and condemns many traditional and current practices, is no easy task. For the most part, the bishops have succeeded. The pastoral is vivid and attuned to the particular lives lived by single, married, separated, divorced, widowed, lesbian, young, old, Caucasian, Asian, black, Hispanic, and native American women. Quoting large chunks from diocesan and individual reactions helps the voices of affirmation and alienation to come alive, making the often angry condemnations and the less frequent hopeful confirmations both poignant and particular.

In a society—our own—more and more traduced by what St. Augustine called *cupiditas,* a lust to dominate that warps and perverts personality, marriage, family, society, politics, all things, the bishops insist that the church must serve as a counter-cultural force, a community that honors and sustains *caritas,* that principle which makes possible the flourishing of the individual personality, sustains the dignity of each person, and binds together those human beings who share what Augustine called a "holy yearning."

To carry out this counter-cultural mission, the bishops confront the paradox that the church itself, as well as the wider social and historic surround in which the church finds and has found itself, is guilty of the *sin* of sexism, practices that fail to respect the dignity of the female person. Some practices, clearly, deserve this condemnation—battering, sexual abuse, refusal to share responsibility for child-rearing, unfair labor practices. But does sexism require that all *differences* between men and women be eliminated? No, the bishops insist, and the burden of current feminist argument would concur. Though organized feminism and the bishops differ on just what differences can or should be maintained, opening up this debate is vital and another strength of the document. For equality is an essentially contested concept. Interpretations over its meaning fill rows and rows of library shelves and lie at the heart of many political stories, both glorious and terrible. Do we have in mind formal-legalistic equality? Equality of opportunity? Equality of respect? Equality of result? To call for gender equality and justice is the beginning, not the end of the story.

If I were advising the bishops, I would suggest the following to strengthen the next draft:

- Listen to voices from the past, particularly those of affirmation that flow from exemplary lives and texts that offer an alternative to tales of woe and victimization. There are so many remarkable women in the Catholic tradition, it seems a pity not to draw them into the narrative. As it stands, the pastoral is very thin on history. Here, the bishops would do well to emulate their pastoral, *The Challenge of Peace*, by situating current women's concerns within a historical framework.
- Spell out in stronger and more compelling terms the markers of that "false equality" that seeks to "eliminate all differences." Spell out why justice is not well served by demands that every difference is itself a blight.
- Resist the temptation (Par. 59, for example) to define the "traditional family" in economic terms as a "male wage earner and a mother who stays at home to care for the children." This bourgeois norm is of relatively recent vintage and is not essential to the moral vision of the family the bishops otherwise elaborate.
- Reexamine a few footnotes. In footnote 98, for example, the bishops cite with apparent approval about ten "authorities." But several of these works are governed by assumptions that are anathema to everything the bishops stand for, including the ugly falsehood that everything is violence and that male/female relations are beyond redemption. □

ANNE E. PATRICK

is associate professor and chair, department of religion, Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota and vice-president of the Catholic Theological Society of America.

In light of the many twentieth-century pronouncements of bishops opposing women's suffrage and the Equal Rights Amendment, reiterating ancient views of women's special and subordinate "nature," and generally seeking to limit women's participation in ecclesiastical and civil society, the draft of the NCCB pastoral is a refreshing change indeed.

The draft's most obvious strength lies in the fact that women have been *heard,* and the bishops have been *affected* by what women have said. This is evident in their willingness to change the title from the proposed topic of "women"—which implied that men would once more speak unilaterally about an oppressed group—to the more respectful "women's concerns," probably a compromise after some women's insistence that the real need was for a pastoral on "sexism," not on "women." This change signifies that a relationship in which the power to name issues and define possibilities was once wielded unilaterally is growing into something more mutual. The title *Partners in the Mystery of Redemption* is clearly intended to symbolize the new ideal of mutuality; it will be a continual challenge to monitor the extent to which "partnership" is real as well as rhetorical.

Also a strength is the recognition of diversity among women—differences of class, race, ethnicity, life-situations, politics, spirituality—in a word, experience. The move from

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the "cult of true womanhood," which presumed that woman's "nature" is easily defined and uniform, is yielding to the recognition that women are as complex, autonomous, and various as men. This recognition is symbolized in the decision to structure the draft so that divergent voices are heard on the document's several themes: personhood, relationships, society, church. As a result, some voices previously tuned out of church conversations are being picked up, and "new" words and ethical concerns are being introduced. Whereas Vatican II's *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, for example, failed to mention rape or domestic violence in its list of crimes against life and human dignity, the new draft pastoral specifies these crimes and, even more important, names the sin of sexism as the moral and social evil that it is. Surely this is progress.

But more is needed. Above all, the document's analysis of sexism and injustice must go deeper. No mention is made in this draft of the fact that *internalized oppression* often makes women complicit in their own subordination. There is a subtext in certain quotes from "voices of affirmation" that escapes scrutiny. One may affirm diverse experiences, but this is not to agree with everyone's analysis of the situation. While it is a good thing to represent the diversity of Catholic women's lives, there is danger that the letter's unusual format may end up romanticizing victims by reporting conflicting testimony that, if granted equal weight, will cancel itself out.

In the cases of the pastoral letters on nuclear weapons and the U.S. economy, many opposing voices were heard, but in the end the bishops were courageous and normative, taking positions that disappointed certain parties a great deal. The NCCB has had the courage to distance itself from the U.S. military lobby, thereby demonstrating that American Catholicism has matured to the point of not confusing patriotism with militarism. The question now is whether the bishops are willing to distance themselves as well from the neoconservative political and economic proponents who have so brilliantly captured the Catholic vote since 1972 by *claiming* to value human life, and who stand to gain by preserving a social order in which women are deprived of full civil rights and economic justice.

I find it curious that whereas specialists in social ethics were highly involved in drafting the other recent NCCB pastorals—J. Bryan Hehir on nuclear issues and David Hollenbach on the U.S. economy—it is not clear that moral theologians or ethicists have had such direct impact on the present draft, although the topic of the pastoral is nothing if not an issue, or set of issues, in moral theology. Articles by Patricia B. Jung and Margaret A. Farley are cited in the notes, as is the forward-looking 1981 pastoral from Bishops Victor Balke and Raymond Lucker, to which Jung contributed ("Male and Female God Created Them"), but otherwise the work of American Catholic women recognized in the field of Christian ethics has not apparently been utilized. It may be, of course, that the limits set by Rome have ruled out from the start the most logical source of theologically trained analysis, for few if any Catholic women moral theologians are persuaded that official teachings on contraception and women's ordination can be justified in our day.

All things considered, this draft is a promising development in a dialogue that needs to go on for a long time. □

Regina deCormier-Shekerjian

Paloma

Have I then been nothing?
Tlacaélel

Beneath the amber cry of the sun
she coos like a dove
on the beach where she walks
trailed by dogs. Her red skirt
slaps her bare legs
as she strides close to the wind-
scuffed lake, the pack of dogs,
close at her heels, bewitched
by her cooing. In her hands
this morning
a red rose she plucked
from the gringo's garden wall.

She offends no one
but her husband with her cooing.

Mornings, afternoons, and again
in the evenings, she walks
this beach, cooing. For this
she has been given the name
Paloma. Paloma,
women whisper at her passing, Paloma
hymns the myth of our being.

The only barren woman in the village,
everyone knows Paloma
has taken powerful herb medicines.
Everyone knows she has made offerings
and prayed daily for years
to the Virgin of Guadalupe and,
just to make sure,
to Coatlicue, Aztec earth mother,
and of these two she finally asked,
have I then been nothing?

And began to coo.

This morning the wind
is crazy with dreams where light bleeds
down the side of the mountain
and slopes across the beach.
The cracked bell of the church
is sounding matins.
Trees are humming their shadows
beneath a sky birds ravel
above the simple sounds of a dove.

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WHAT JOHNNY CAN'T READ

PARENTS, TEXTBOOKS, & THE COURTS

ERIC JORSTAD

When Vicki Frost read the textbooks her children brought home from the local public school, she was appalled. She wanted her children to grow up believing in God, and living the way the Bible says they ought to live. But here in her corner of Tennessee, in her own local public school, stories about Buddhism and Hinduism were taught, as were stories about eliminating the distinct roles of men and women. The textbooks were full of ideas she believed the Bible had clearly spoken on, and denounced. She started to wonder: why should her children have to be exposed to these false ideas?

Frost showed these primers to other parents who shared her fundamentalist Christian beliefs, who in turn pored over their own children's textbooks. They soon agreed: their children must not be forced to study these ideas upon which they believed the Bible has firmly spoken. Together they formed Citizens Organized for Better Schools (COBS) and tried to change the reading requirements.

Little did they realize that their religious objections would make their way to the United States Supreme Court, which, on February 22, 1988, denied their petition for a hearing.

At first the parents and local school teachers and principals worked out an accommodation to let the affected children "opt out" of the reading classes and study alternative books. The Hawkins County School Board, however, stepped in and forbade this arrangement. The board said that the children would have to go to reading class and read the regular textbooks like everyone else if they wanted to attend the public schools.

Frost and the other parents still refused to let their children study the required books. After their children were suspended, the parents filed a lawsuit against the public schools, alleging that their constitutional rights had been infringed under the First Amendment guarantee of the "free exercise" of religion. They sought an injunction in the U. S. District Court in Eastern Tennessee to allow their children to be excused from reading class and never again be required to read the textbooks they considered religiously offensive.

ERIC JORSTAD, *formerly pastor of St. James Lutheran Church in Detroit, and consultant to the Office of Church and Society of the American Lutheran Church, is currently a student at Yale Law School.*

Judge Hull agreed. In *Mozert v. Hawkins County Public Schools* (1986), Hull found that the parents' right to free exercise of religion had indeed been infringed. He said that the children could not be required to read textbooks that offended them. Instead the children would attend all their classes except reading, from which they would be excused. They would study reading at home and be tested by the school for competency. Tennessee law already provided parents with the option of educating their children entirely at home; Judge Hull proposed a partial home-schooling "opt-out" just for reading class. This did *not* mean that the "Holt Readers" series of textbooks was banned from use in Hawkins County public schools. It did mean that the objecting students would not have to study them. The court also awarded the parents $50,000 compensation for having had to send their children to private schools while awaiting adjudication.

The case was reversed, however, on appeal in the U.S. Court of Appeals, Sixth Circuit, on August 24, 1987. By a 3 to 0 vote, the appeals bench in Cincinnati reversed and ruled in favor of the school board. The court wrote that the parents' case fell short of showing that the schools had unconstitutionally burdened the parents' and students' right to the free exercise of their religion. Judge Lively held that *exposure* to offensive textbooks in a public school classroom does not infringe upon the free *exercise* of religion. The students are only being exposed to a variety of ideas, he reasoned; unlike other cases where free exercise rights have been upheld, the students here are not being compelled to do anything (like salute the flag) or to affirm or deny any particular belief. The students have no right to not be exposed to ideas they find offensive in a public school curriculum. Further, as the school board showed at the trial, a major goal of the reading class is to encourage the students to decide for themselves what they believe. This requires exposure to a variety of viewpoints, some of which will be controversial.

In her concurring opinion, Judge Kennedy reasoned that even if reading the textbooks did burden the parents' or students' free exercise of religion, the state has an *overriding* interest in providing quality public education. Courts cannot interfere with the schools every time someone reads something they think is offensive. The potential plethora of lawsuits would result in administrative chaos, putting both courts and local school officials in an untenable position. Last fall the

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parents petitioned the Supreme Court to review (and, they hoped, overturn) the decision of the Appeals Court. The high court denied their petition; thus the lower-court ruling stands.

What is the constitutional significance of this decision, in light of Supreme Court rulings on similar cases? What effect will this decision have on religion in the public schools?

The *precise* question of this case has never been decided by the highest court—namely, how could public school board decisions about required textbooks infringe upon students' or parents' free exercise of religion under the First Amendment? Many public school cases have come before the Court under the *other* religion clause of the First Amendment: that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion." School prayer, Bible reading, "released time" religious instruction, Creationism, and textbook banning are all establishment questions. There the Court has emphasized the "wall of separation" between church and state, and the necessity of governmental "neutrality" between religions and between religion and non-religion. The government can never promote or inhibit any particular religion or religious belief, or religion itself.

But the Hawkins County parents were not asking for a textbook ban, or for the government to change its actions toward everyone in the schools. They just didn't want *their* right to exercise their religion denied. That makes this case different, free exercise instead of establishment.

A long line of free exercise cases in the Supreme Court would seem to have supported the claims of the parents. These include very recent cases, but they mostly concern areas other than public education. In *Sherbert v. Verner*, a seminal case decided in 1963, the Court ruled that a Seventh Day Adventist who had quit her job when it began to require her to work on Saturdays, her religious sabbath, could not be denied unemployment compensation. She could not be denied government benefits, the Court said, simply for following the dictates of her religion, even if the requirements for the benefits say nothing directly about religion.

Does such reasoning apply to *Mozert*? At the District Court trial, Judge Hull found that it does. The parents were being forced to give up a governmental benefit—free public education—for refusing to allow their children to do what they sincerely believed to be prohibited by their religion. Shouldn't the government have to accommodate their beliefs by letting the children opt out of reading class?

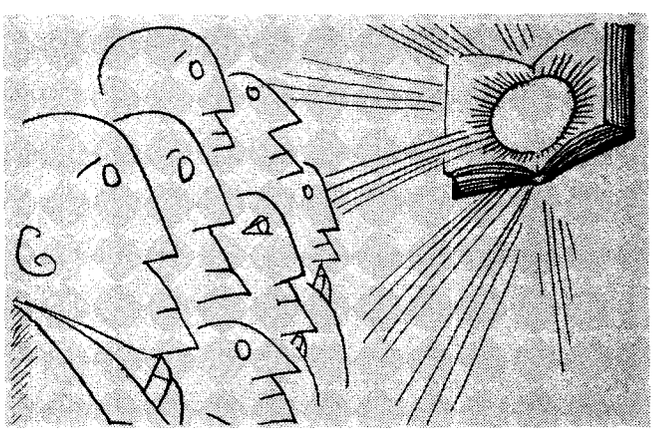
Twice the Supreme Court has upheld free exercise rights in the public school context. In *West Virginia State Education v. Barnette* (1943), the Court held that the State could not compel a student who objected on religious grounds to salute the flag and give the pledge of allegiance. But, as Justice Jackson wrote for the Court majority, "[W]e are dealing with a compulsion of students to declare a belief. They are not merely made acquainted with the flag salute so that they may be informed as to what it is or even what it means." The difference between "compulsion" and "being informed" distinguishes this case from *Mozert*, where the students were only being informed about a variety of ideas, not compelled to act them out or to believe in them (indeed, they were invited to criticize them in class discussion).

In *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972), the Supreme Court held that the State of Wisconsin could not compel the Yoders' children to attend high school. The Yoders' Amish religion required their complete separation from the modern world. Sending their children to public schools after a certain age, they believed, where the values the Yoders shunned were inculcated, violated their religion. The Court found that since the continued existence of the Amish as a religious community depended on this separation, the state could not compel them to go to school.

This was Vicki Frost's strongest case support at the highest level. Her case must be distinguished from the Yoders', however, on at least two points.

- First, while the Yoders did not want to have anything to do with public education after a certain age, nor did they accept its statutorily prescribed goals, the *Mozert* petitioners wanted the benefits of a public education, and accepted its statutorily prescribed goals, but wanted these benefits on their own terms. At trial Vicki Frost said she *wants* the benefits of modern life. The threat to her children of a particular set of readers cannot compare to the threat the Yoders faced to their whole (religious) way of life.
- Second, *Yoder* was a case concerning compulsory attendance in the Wisconsin public schools; the Yoders sought exemption from a state statute with misdemeanor sanctions (a fine between $5 and $50 and/or imprisonment for not more than three months). The Yoders' free exercise rights were infringed when the state sought them out for criminal prosecution. *Mozert* was a case concerning personal objections to one textbook series used in the curriculum of the Hawkins County public schools. The *Mozert* petitioners initiated a civil lawsuit. They sought an injunction to be exempted from their local school board's administrative decision.

If *Yoder* was Ms. Frost's strongest case support, then the constitutional status of her claim looks less persuasive. Furthermore, there is another long line of cases in the Supreme Court about the courts' role in overseeing religion and public education which strongly supports the county school board.



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A foundational case is *Illinois ex rel. McCollum v. Board of Education*, decided in 1947, which prohibits the use of public school facilities for religious instruction. The courts are clearly called to uphold the constitutional rights of public school students, but, as Justice Jackson wrote in his concurring opinion:

> Authorities list 256 separate and substantial religious bodies to exist in the continental United States. Each of them ... has as good a right as this plaintiff to demand that the courts compel the schools to sift out of their teaching everything inconsistent with its doctrines. If we are to eliminate everything that is objectionable to any of these warring sects or inconsistent with any of their doctrines, we will leave public education in shreds.

The Justice feared that the Supreme Court could become a "super school board" to every public school in the country.

In *Yoder* itself the Supreme Court reiterated its judicial deference to the decisions of local school authorities. Although supporting the free exercise rights of the Yoders, the Court noted: "Our disposition of this case, however, in no way alters our recognition of the obvious fact that courts are not school boards or legislatures, and are ill-equipped to determine the 'necessity' of discrete aspects of a state's program of compulsory education." This supports the authority of the Hawkins County Board of Education to determine whether the Holt series of textbooks is "necessary" to meet its goal of providing a quality education.

Judge Kennedy, in her Sixth Circuit concurring opinion in the Mozert case, argued that a uniform series of readers is necessary to fulfill the state's interest in teaching citizenship and democratic self-government. The public school system is committed to the idea that controversy in the classroom is desirable in that it helps the students develop their own values. Differing viewpoints are essential in teaching civil tolerance, an element of good citizenship which the Tennessee legislature requires the schools to teach. That some students find exposure to some ideas in the Holt series objectionable cannot be grounds for an exemption if the government is to teach all students to "read and discuss complex, morally and socially difficult issues," wrote Kennedy. The offended students are free to raise their objections in class discussions. This may be difficult, not only for younger children but also for older children who face peer pressure to conform. But no one in the schools could learn how to handle controversial topics if everyone offended by them could be shuttled in and out of the classroom.

Vicki Frost and her fellow believers in Hawkins County are not really being compelled, under First Amendment free exercise standards, to do anything contrary to their religious beliefs. They already have three options under Tennessee laws: (1) send their children to private or church-based schools where instruction will not offend their religious beliefs; (2) educate their children themselves at home, provided their children can go on to pass certain standardized tests proving minimal competence; and (3) work through established political processes to change the decision of the school board about the textbooks it uses.

This last option is important. The Frosts are free to rally their community to seek change, either in the textbooks used (provided the new textbooks do not "establish" any religious beliefs and still provide quality education), or in the composition of the school board. The offended parents can run for the school board themselves, or propose to the electorate an alternative slate of candidates. Judge Boggs, in his Sixth Circuit concurring opinion, noted the importance of this possibility for the parents: "Plaintiffs are, of course, free to work politically and by education to change the school curriculum, just as others worked and succeeded in making the changes to which plaintiffs object." The Sixth Circuit opinion means, Boggs went on, that "the democratic principle must prevail." Judicial deference to the local control of school boards puts conflict and decision making closest to those who are most affected by it.

If the Court had agreed to hear *Mozert* and supported the parents, it would have meant a significant extension of free exercise protections into the arena of the public schools. Instead, in supporting the local school board, the Court has continued to refuse to make the federal judiciary a "super school board" to the nation. This puts the decision back into the hands of the parents and the local community.

The sad irony of this case is that Frost and her COBS

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partners are doing, in one sense, what every teacher and school board member would love to see more of—they are closely involved with and deeply care about the education of their children. Their method of involvement, however, challenges the concept of *public* education. If theologian Martin Marty is right, that American culture is becoming increasingly "tribalized" into "warring sects," we can expect more lawsuits like this one. Future plaintiffs' lawyers could well find inspiration for litigation in the fact that the Supreme Court did not roundly and explicitly deny the fundamentalists' claims in *Mozert*. More cases will likely stalk through the courts, leaving teachers, school boards, and local voters looking over their shoulders. In this larger sense public education will continue to be our classroom for "civility" in self-government. What lesson will be taught? □

SCREEN

NATURAL MEN, II/III

'CROCODILE' & 'RAMBO'

Will someone please explain to me the one charming idiosyncracy marking our national affliction of pictures-by-the-numbers? Why are some sequels titled with Roman rather than Arabic numerals? There seems no difference in quality: *Poltergeist III* is as bad as *Nightmare on Elm Street 5*. Perhaps Roman numerals originated with heroic associations: they are used for kings, popes, and Super Bowls. This summer, in any case, no one tries harder to carry off those heroic associations than *Crocodile Dundee II* and *Rambo III*.

Croc II follows up on the surprising success of its original, which nudged unexpectantly into the market in 1985, and kangaroo-jumped its way to $400 million in profits. Pop audiences like their romanticism straightforward, and Paul Hogan delivers. Indeed, he restored a sense of conservative order not just by triumphing over his enemies, but triumphing over women, albeit in a friendly way. Basic to the plot of *Croc I* was Linda Koslowski, the pert American reporter who challenged Dundee's acumen but needed his rescue in scrape after scrape in the rugged bush country where he fished, earned his nickname fighting predators, and knew every nook and cranny like a down-under Dan'l Boone. He becomes her knight in shining, well, snakeskin. She can't help but fall in love—especially when he triumphs again in New York through the honesty and simplicity of his "natural" behavior.

Croc II matches Mick Dundee and crime melodrama. Hogan and Koslowski get involved with Colombian drug dealers—who doesn't in film, these days? Action is slow to unfold, romance is muted, and the jokes on nature vs. civilization are predictable. The best scene involves Japanese tourists who mistake Hogan for Clint Eastwood. The film's second half has better pacing: hero and heroine return to Walkabout Creek to escape the meanies. Needless to say, the evildoers make the mistake of attacking Mick on his home turf, where he calls on nature (especially bats, lizards, and aborigines) and wins the day.

Hogan shaped Mick Dundee's persona, and to a degree shares in it. In ads or films, Hogan presents an appealing persona: confident but not cocksure, rugged-looking but smooth (even cordial) of voice, tough but chivalric, triumphant but not violent. His jokes all include a knowing wink: hey, mate, join in my fun. Australia beckons us with memories of our own frontier—and the Westerns that mythologize it. Of this nostalgia, Hogan is the prophet and reaps the profit. His virtue lies in softening frontier images with casual but genuine decency: a John Wayne with an accent and sense of humor.

Rambo III treads more heavily across darker ground, Afghanistan. It also caps a trend Sylvester Stallone may be credited with starting, the return of war to the national cultural agenda. Witness, despite differences of style and content, recent films like *Top Gun*, *Hamburger Hill*, *Platoon*, and the upcoming *Nam*. On television, *China Beach*, *The Dirty Dozen*, and *Supercarrier* smoothly replaced ailing shows this spring as if readied in reponse to public receptivity. Last fall CBS began airing *Tour of Duty*, a grunt's eye view of Vietnam. HBO has aired the fine *Dear America* and there is more.

Some media pundits claim the new attention to war, especially our loss in Vietnam, marks maturity. But recognition is only the first step in therapy, understanding the second, and of this, as each *Rambo* movie reminds us, there is precious little. When Stallone asked his fateful stab-in-the-back question about Vietnam in *Rambo II*, "This time, do we get to win?" his assumption was that we should have won, just as we always did before.

Interestingly, the initial screenplay for *III* had Rambo fighting Iranians. It had to be scrapped when Irangate broke; suppose he was shot at with one of Ollie's missiles? With judicious footwork, Rocky/Rambo reversed directions, and now sides with the Islamic fundamentalists—after all, they fight against Russians, no? Or used to—until the Soviet withdrawal. *Rambo III* marks the third time (after *II* and *Rocky IV*) that Stallone has gone toe to toe with the Russkies. He'd better pray peace doesn't break out and halt his film career.

Stallone's humor, unlike Hogan's, is never intentional. The film opens with him in a Thai Buddhist monastery. Except for stick fighting for prize money (all proceeds donated to the monks), Rambo has renounced violence and resists the appeals of his old army boss (Richard Crenna) to help run weapons across the Pakistan border. Still, once the Evil Russian (Marc de Jonge) captures Crenna, it's sayonara to Satyagraha.

The film cost $60 million to make, ten times the price tag for *Croc II*. Much of the cost results from blowing up tanks and helicopters in the fiery Apocalypse that follows Rambo's reentry into action. Stallone still wears his Geronimo-style headband, and performs some self first-aid that somewhat resembles Chuck Connors's at the end of *Apache*. He also still uses bow-and-arrows to wreak his ever-so-reluctant vengeance.

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But his "natural man" is as fake as his overstated sanctity: the arrows are explosive-tipped.

Hogan is a better comedian, natural man, and icon. Once in *Croc I*, Mick Dundee tells his lady that he feels God inhabits the Australian wilderness. Does he believe in God and heaven, she asks. Sure, he responds: "There, He and me'll be mates." The line is good light humor on naiveté, but is not unbelievable. Mick Dundee is our latest naif "holy man." Too bad he can't lure Rocky/Rambo to the outback and teach him a lesson.

TOM O'BRIEN

STAGE

ROUGH DIAMONDS

MAMET'S 'SPEED-THE-PLOW'

In Thomas Morton's *Speed the Plough* (1800), the most famous character is Mrs. Grundy, whose name became a synonym for British respectability, and she never appears at all. In David Mamet's *Speed-the-Plow*, the most pervasive character is also offstage: the American movie audience. As in Morton's play, where characters are constantly guessing what Mrs. Grundy would think, Mamet's Hollywood hacks, who have their commercial credibility rather than their reputations to lose, assume that they know what will bring the moviegoers to the boxoffice: what brought them there last week. Their low estimate of the public is confirmed by the weekly listing of movie grosses; in the most recent *Friday the Thirteenth* topped *Beetlejuice*. Anyone for *Rambo III?*

Mamet's up-from-the-mailroom dealers are rough diamonds—zircons, at least—who know each other so well that they can overlap one another's speeches, communicate in reiterated platitudes decorated with sometimes elegant obscenity. Bobby Gould (Joe Mantegna) has just become head of production at what we are to accept as a major studio and Charlie Fox (Ron Silver), who comes to him on his first day in power, has snagged a bankable star for a buddy movie he is trying to peddle. They agree to join forces, go onward and upward with the sellable schlock, but the path of true greed never runs smooth. Enter the woman, for that is the way it is with buddy movies and has been at least since *Gunga Din*. *Speed-the-Plow* is a Mamet variation on the buddy movie. His best plays *(American Buffalo, Glengarry Glen Ross)* are set in male enclaves, and *Sexual Perversity in Chicago* follows the buddy formula in its story. So does *Speed-the-Plow*. After the requisite feminine interruption, the two men go off together to face the studio head—like Flagg and Quirt hurrying to the front in *What Price Glory?*—and the woman is tossed aside.

If there is a difficulty in *Speed-the-Plow*, it lies with the woman in the case. It is not, as some reviewers have insisted, because Madonna is playing Karen. Her performance is not as flashily fine as those of Mategna and Silver, but she does a creditable job with a character who—unlike Bobby and Charlie—is never clearly defined. At first she seems to be the dumb secretary stereotype, too dense to find the coffee machine, but at this stage she may be only a reflection of Bobby's attitude toward women. He accepts Charlie's bet that he cannot seduce her. In her big scene in Act II, having read and presumably been won over by the book on nuclear destruction that Bobby asked her to give "a courtesy read," she persuades him to present it to the studio head rather than the buddy script. She does so not by argument, but by sleeping with him. In the last act, she has a new authority, a taste of power that leads her to the plural pronoun ("we have a meeting"), but if she were just another ambitious broad, as Charlie insists, she would not answer his direct question as she does, admitting that she only went to bed with Bobby to get the film made. That revelation frees Bobby of his flirtation with art and social conscience and sends him back to his true calling as a junk merchant.

It is possible that Mamet intends Karen as an innocent for whom the true heart of Hollywood is as elusive as the coffee machine—just the person to be taken in by the "Eastern wimp" author's pretentious book. It sounds like the kind of work which fondles the annihilation of the world while it whimpers its dessicated whisper of hope. There is a marvelous moment in which Karen tries to use the book to resnare Bobby after he allies himself again with Charlie. She reads a ponderous paragraph and then, faced with defeat, insists that that is not the passage she has in mind and keeps flipping the pages hopelessly. Mamet seems to be using the book and Karen's naive embrace of it as a matter for satire, but there is a problem there too. Reviewers tended to describe the book as an "anti-radiation" novel, but it is called *Radiation* and, from what we hear of the argument, the author is using *radiation* and Mamet uses *decay* and *decadence* in his essays in *Writing in Restaurants*, as a necessary destructive stage to revitalization. Mamet's theory of decadence seems to me fair game for the satirist, but I am not sure that he is Bernard Shaw enough to guy his own ideas for the sake of the play.

Whether Karen's projected movie is a joke or a serious option for Hollywood or a comic suggestion that serious options are possible, it is rejected. Greed and vulgarity triumph. Yet Mamet has more in mind than a ritual chiding of Hollywood venality. In a group interview in the *New York Times* (May 16), Madonna called the play a metaphor: "it's not just about Hollywood. It's about life." Silver modified her metaphor by suggesting that this was still another of Mamet's examinations of American business: "You show me one person in business who decides to do something that's good if the sacrifice is their quarterly statement." The Mamet point of view is clear enough, but the play's successful borrowing of the buddy plot muddies the social theme. Bobby and Charlie are a reprehensible pair (each would sacrifice the other for an edge up), but Mategna and Silver give them so much energy, so much *chutzpah*, so much tacky charm that we find ourselves rooting for Bobby's return to chicanery. Maybe that is the point. Maybe the target is not Hollywood, not American business, but the audience itself.

GERALD WEALES

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How new is Gorbachev's 'new thinking'?

JEFFREY W. HAHN

I remember the first time I saw Mikhail Gorbachev on television. It was in Moscow in December, 1984. The man who would become the general secretary of the party a few months later was shown in animated conversation with British Prime Minister Thatcher and, presumably for proletarian balance, with a group of factory workers. I remarked to a Soviet friend that this man would come across well in the West. It was not hard to predict. In sharp contrast to the often infirm, always dour, unsmiling Soviet leaders who preceded him, here was a man of vigor and self-confidence, able and even eager to engage in the kind of public give-and-take one associates with experienced presidential candidates in full campaign stride. Within the context of what the Western public had come to expect of Soviet elites, Gorbachev seemed startlingly new and different; a petunia in a patch full of undistinguished onions.

Since then, of course, Gorbachev has become something of a media star, a celebrity whose face appears regularly on serious magazine covers, and whose ability to command air time has been a source of some concern to White House communications staff seeking "spin control." Because Gorbachev's style represents such a radical departure from previous Soviet leaders, there is an understandable tendency to perceive him politically as a radical; because the man is unprecedented in our experience, his policies must be also.

JEFFREY W. HAHN *was a Fulbright Teaching Scholar on the Law Faculty of Moscow State University from January to June, 1987. He is a professor of political science at Villanova University, and the author of* Soviet Grassroots *(Princeton University Press).*

Without diminishing Gorbachev's importance as a force for change in the Soviet Union, one theme that emerges from all three of the books under review is that the policies of *perestroika* (usually translated as restructuring; reconstruction or rebuilding would be more accurate), while perhaps revolutionary, are not so new as they appear and need to be understood in the context of what preceded them. This is a surprising consensus, given the rather differing perspectives of the three authors. Aside from Gorbachev himself, Moshe Lewin is a former Soviet citizen now teaching social history at the University of Pennsylvania; and Marshall Goldman, a well-known specialist and policy advisor on the Soviet Union, teaches economics at Wellesley College. Yet one comes away from reading these books with a similar impression: *perestroika* is like an earthquake; it is visible and dramatic, but the plates below the surface have been moving for some time.

Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and World, *Mikhail Gorbachev, Harper & Row, $19.95, 254 pp.*

Gorbachev's Challenge, *Marshall Goldman, W. W. Norton, $16.95, $7.95 paper, 296 pp.*

The Gorbachev Phenomenon: A Historical Interpretation, *Moshe Lewin, California, $16.95, 176 pp.*

In fact, many of the specific policies adopted in connection with *perestroika* represent the official expression of ideas which were often debated publicly by members of the Soviet intelligentsia for years before Gorbachev came to power. If these ideas seem new to Western observers, it is only because of a lack of familiarity with this literature or a failure to take it seriously. This point is made especially forcefully by Professor Lewin in his chapter on the evolution of the social sciences in the Soviet Union over the past two decades. In my own research on local government in the Soviet Union, for example, discussions in the scholarly literature about introducing competition in electoral practices can be found in the 1960s; they received expression in legislation mandating more candidates than seats in the June 1987 local elections, an experiment in selected districts to be generalized nationally in the next election cycle.

More, much of what seems so new about *perestroika* is in fact rooted in experience. Professor Goldman's book reminds us that most if not all of the economic reforms now under way in the Soviet Union have not only been tried before (e.g., Lenin's New Economic Policy of the 1920s; the Liberman-Kosygin reforms of 1965) but are in fact rather conservative when compared with experiments under way in China and, to a lesser degree, in Hungary.

To his credit, Gorbachev does not contradict this view. On the contrary, he acknowledges that "analysis began a long time before the April 1985 Plenary meeting" at which the general policy line of *perestroika* was initially articulated. He makes it quite clear that the ideas behind *perestroika* had been in motion for some time. Unfortunately, one also encounters throughout his book the same frequent, if less dogmatic, references to Lenin that one is used to in the speeches of Soviet leaders.

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If there are doubters about Gorbachev's commitment to socialism, for example, *Perestroika* will set them straight: "Any hopes that we will begin to build a different, non-socialist society and go over to the other camp are unrealistic and futile. Those who expect us to give up socialism will be disappointed." This is not especially new; Chernenko and Brezhnev said much the same. It is certainly not radical. What is new, and even radical, is that ideas unacceptable only five years ago are now being given official expression and wrapped in the mantle of legitimacy which only the Party leader can bestow.

There is another theme that resonates in all three of the books under review: the policies of *perestroika* represent the necessary adjustment of the political system to changes in Soviet society of longstanding. There is in this sense a deterministic quality found in all three works. Gorbachev is more a symptom of change than its cause. Nowhere is this point more clearly made than in Lewin's *The Gorbachev Phenomenon*. Stated simply, the title of the book refers to the author's central argument that Gorbachev is a product of the social structural changes which accompanied the Soviet Union's transition from a rural society to an urban one.

Of these changes, none is more important than the emergence of an educated professional and intellectual elite over the past thirty years or so. These Soviet yuppies provide the basis for a new, reform-minded "political class"; Gorbachev is its prototype. Lewin's conclusions regarding this generation are very optimistic. In his view, if Gorbachev can hold on for two or three years, "the bells will have tolled for the old party." He goes on to speak of a "new age," in which the "vestiges of an age-old agrarian despotism" will give way to a new and more democratic state system.

A good deal less optimistic, but perhaps no less deterministic is Goldman's analysis of the Soviet economy. Indeed in at least two passages he specifically, if ironically, evokes Marxian dialectics to explain how changes in the mode of production—the "third industrial revolution" of high technology—are forcing commensurate changes in the political superstructure. In his chapters dealing with the evolution of the Soviet economy he convincingly demonstrates how inappropriate a command system using quantitative indicators of performance is for the introduction and development of high technology. Without the transition to a qualitative basis for economic growth, the Soviet economy will remain second-rate in all but a few high-priority military sectors. Moreover, the Soviet Union cannot simply import technology; without changing the system, it won't be able to absorb it. Economic change, however, is impossible without political change and political change will be tolerated only if there are visible economic benefits. Gorbachev's challenge is to break this gridlock. Goldman's evaluation is that he "will have to settle for less than he aspires to."

Interestingly, Gorbachev's own analysis of the situation does not greatly differ from Goldman's, except, of course, that he is far more upbeat about its chances of success. At one point he asks rhetorically about the "main shortcoming" of the old economic system. His answer essentially is too much centralized planning and he concludes with refreshing clarity: "We can no longer run our affairs like that."

Perhaps, but when it comes to Gorbachev's assessment of support for *perestroika* he waxes grandiloquent. Despite "some differences of opinion," he insists that in the politburo "we are at one insofar as the main thing is concerned—we are unanimous in our belief that *perestroika* is indispensable and indeed inevitable, and that we have no other option." As for the public at large, he finds, "there is one thing common to all the letters—unreserved and passionate support for *perestroika*." If this is not naiveté—and naiveté is not normally a qualification for rising to the position of General Secretary—then it is certainly disingenuous.

Perestroika as a book has other shortcomings. It was written, and perhaps published as well, in haste. There is little that is not already known from other sources, and indeed large sections are occasionally lifted out of speeches given earlier and patched together incongruously; the author jumps rather abruptly from one topic to the next. The chief benefit of the book is that, taken as a whole, it offers an easily digestible potpourri of Gorbachev's thinking for a Western audience.

There are also problems with the books by Lewin and Goldman. In Lewin's view the failure of Western

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analysts to anticipate what he calls the Gorbachev phenomenon is rooted in the continued attachment of Western Sovietology to the totalitarian model. Because this model focuses attention on political power at the top, Western students of the Soviet Union have failed to consider what has been happening elsewhere in Soviet society and how social change affects political institutions. As a result, Lewin informs us, "the interrelation of society and culture with the economy, the state, and the party remained unexplored."

Professor Lewin is, of course, quite right in pointing out this shortcoming in the totalitarian approach; on the other hand, he is to be faulted for presenting this critique as new. In fact, much of the scholarly literature on the Soviet Union jettisoned a rigid adherence to this view twenty years ago. The interdependent relationship between society and government has been a dominant theme in the field of comparative politics since the 1950s; it is introductory-level political science. In short, it would appear that Professor Lewin is open to the same charge he makes throughout his work: unfamiliarity with the literature, only in his case it is with the Western literature.

Professor Goldman's book suffers from an ailment common to many of the recent works dealing with the Soviet Union under Gorbachev: a rush to judgment.

Authors appear pressed, perhaps by their publishers, to tell us whether *perestroika* will succeed or not. In fact, it will take a decade or more to draw such conclusions. To give one example, the Law on State Enterprise which was adopted following the June 1987 Central Committee plenum is the economic blueprint of *perestroika* and incorporates many of the approaches to reform urged by Professor Goldman. It only went into effect in January 1988. Much of Goldman's analysis is based on information available before June 1987. Yet the author persists in asking "so what are the prospects for reform?" This tendency toward timeliness detracts from the provocative analysis offered in the rest of the book,

Anne Porter

Looking at the Sky

I never will have time
I never will have time enough
To say
How beautiful it is
The way the moon
Floats in the air
As easily
And lightly as a bird
Although she is a world
Made all of stone.

I never will have time enough
To praise
The way the stars
Hang glittering in the dark
Of steepest heaven
Their dewy sparks
Their brimming drops of light
So fresh so clear
That when you look at them
It quenches thirst.

Joan Rohr Myers

The Opaqueness of Bodies

You stand at the curb,
a shadow sewn to your feet
by the slant of the sun
and I watch the effect
as rays astonished by skin
break and bounce back
from your surface.
You are radiant
with what you've been given.

I study the details:
the flash from your eyes
and the soft blur of lashes,
while the form on the grass
stripped of the features
that mark you
outlines an absence of light.

There's an opaqueness in bodies
that cries for a witness
to pull it from darkness
and even at night
the sky finds a source
to show us its pieces
in small bright bursts.

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especially regarding the introduction of new technology and the lessons of the Chinese and Hungarian reforms. One expects more caution from a scholar of the first rank like Professor Goldman.

In the end, what is so new about Gorbachev's "new thinking"? As all three books point out, the ideas that form the intellectual foundations of *perestroika* have been around for quite a while. Moreover, the necessity and direction of change was largely determined by factors in motion long before 1985; Gorbachev himself emerges almost as an inevitable product of social change rather than a cause. Yet it strikes this reviewer that Gorbachev is a new thinker in at least one important sense: he sees the world and his own country's place in it interdependently. If the ideas behind *perestroika* are not new, his attempt to synthesize them is. Domestically, this means a clear-eyed recognition that you cannot change one part of the system without effecting change in all the others and that therefore the system as a whole must be changed. Internationally, it is a recognition that "for all the different choices made by nations in different times, this world is nevertheless one whole." Such a view is about as far from Stalin's "two-camp" theories about international relations as you can get. □

BOOKS

Celebrating 'Yom Hashoah'

THE COURAGE TO CARE
Rescuers of Jews
During the Holocaust
Edited by Carol Rittner, R.S.M. and Sondra Myers
New York University, $24.95, 157 pp.

Jack Riemer

Every year, I face the same dilemma when *Yom Hashoah* comes. What should I do on this day for remembering the Holocaust?

Part of me says: "Forget it!" What good does it do to perpetuate the evil that occurred? Part of me is afraid that if I retell the story of the atrocities, of the brutalities, of the wanton waste of innocent lives, if I tell my children that a million and a half Jewish children were slaughtered, then I may harm my children's psyches, I may diminish their ability to trust in the sanity of humanity. I may make them feel that the whole world is out to get them and no one can live a healthy life if he or she feels that way.

Part of me says: "Remember it!" But I don't know how. Candle-lightings, speeches, assemblies seem so weak a way of observing this watershed event in human history. I am tempted to make of this day a major event in the calendar for I do not want amnesia to occur. I am tempted to make it a day for indicting—not only the Nazis but the spectators who also share a measure of responsibility for what happened. But if I do that, what will it do to my own soul and to my children and what will it accomplish for my neighbors?

Now this book has appeared and given me a way of observing *Yom Hashoah* that I think makes sense. Carol Rittner is a Catholic Sister of Mercy; Sondra Myers a national leader in the arts and education. Together, they have assembled a collection of interviews and testimonies and first-person accounts by people who rescued Jews during the Holocaust. There were not a great many such people. Obviously, how could there be? There are never a host of heroes who are able to carry out extraordinary acts of courage. But there were more than we were aware of, and to read their stories is important—as part of the historical record, and for guidance.

The people who speak in this book are not used to calling attention to themselves. They talk with diffidence. All they did was open doors or give shelter or feed children or keep secrets, but in the midst of so much darkness what they did was luminous.

We ought to focus on these stories and make them a required part of the curriculum in all our schools. We should do this *not* in order to minimize the catastrophe or to bleach out the horror but because these people deserve to be remembered and because their stories help to restore our faith in the human capacity to be good. There is a Simon Weisenthal and there is someone in the Justice Department who devote their lives to tracking down Nazis who are in hiding in this country or elsewhere. I respect the need for that, but it seems to me that we also need Simon Weisenthals who will track down and discover good people who are living in obscurity as well. How is it, as Rabbi Harold Schulweis has observed, that we all know the names of Klaus Barbie and Mengele and Eichmann but none of us can remember the names of the people who gave shelter to Anne Frank or took in Abba Kovner or smuggled Jews across the border at Le Chambon-sur-Lignon?

This book and the film that has been made out of it are both important spiritual documents. What I found most moving was the contrast between the accounts which are told in such a matter-of-fact manner and the snapshots and photographs that appear on the same pages that are so eloquent. For example, there is a snapshot of a woman sitting at a sewing machine. She was the concierge in an apartment building, hardly the kind of

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person about whom sagas are composed. She is obviously a plain woman and yet she hid people in a broom closet and convinced the Nazis that the family had left. What goes through the mind of a woman who does that? How is that she was able to do what more learned, more cultured, more officially religious people were not? No one can answer that question with certainty. In the end, we are only left with statements as simple and yet as profound as Marion Pritchard's: "It did not occur to me to do anything other than what I did. After what I had seen outside that children's home, I could not have done anything else. I think you have a responsibility to yourself to behave decently."

I stare at that photograph and I ponder the mystery of this human being, so saintly and so unaware of her saintliness.

We are a people whose tradition includes gratitude as one of its central categories. And therefore, we ought to remember the people in this book and honor them and care for them if they need that. And we ought to teach their stories. Let Christian children have role models to study in their schools. Let Jewish children have these stories to study in our schools, so that all of us may be able to hold onto our faith in the existence of good without which a healthy human life is difficult to maintain.

Now that we have this book, I know what to do next year on *Yom Hashoah*. □

FAULTY CONSTRUCTION

BENEATH THE AMERICAN RENAISSANCE
The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville
David S. Reynolds
Alfred A. Knopf, $35, 625 pp.

Mark Feeney

It was F. O. Matthiessen who, in his 1941 book of the same name, first referred to the outpouring of works by Emerson, Whitman, Melville, Hawthorne, and Thoreau as an "American Renaissance." *American Renaissance* went on to become a classic in American studies. While essentially literary in approach, Matthiessen was explicit about not wishing to divorce the text from its social and political setting. He was, after all, one of Harvard's great "Three M's" (Matthiessen, Kenneth Murdock, Perry Miller) who did so much in the middle years of this century to revise our understanding of the American past and its cultural fruits. They emphasized—most notably with the Puritans, but throughout the canon—the analysis of American literature in terms of its larger cultural context.

As the title suggests, David S. Reynolds's *Beneath the American Renaissance* takes Matthiessen as its point of departure: in subject, of course, but also in approach. Indeed, its literary view of "the possibilities of democracy" (Matthiessen's phrase) extends far beyond anything in *American Renaissance*. In stating his book's procedure, Reynolds, who is director of Whitman Studies at Rutgers' Camden campus, makes this plain. *Beneath the American Renaissance* "compares the major literature with a broad range of lesser-known works, combines literary analysis with social history, and discusses writings of various geographical regions and both sexes. It attempts to bridge the gap between criticism that treats literature as self-referential and cultural history, in which the uniqueness of the literary text often gets lost."

Reynolds would seem to have read nearly everything—I do not exaggerate—published in antebellum nineteenth-century America. Clearly, he has written a work of grand ambition and even grander industry. It comprises four major sections. The first examines the impact of religion, as well as of political and social reform, on the classic American writers. (Reynolds adds Poe and Dickinson; Matthiessen excluded them for chronological reasons.) The next is devoted to sensationalism and sexuality in popular writing and their influence on Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, and Whitman. The third surveys women's literature of the period, considers Hawthorne's heroines, and concludes with a lengthy analysis of Dickinson. The final section, which pertains to humor, describes the "carnivalization of American Language" and treats all of Reynolds's authors except Dickinson.

In each section Reynolds begins by noting a variety of examples—themes, characters, imagery, plots—from popular literature or journalism of the day, then points out comparable elements in the work of his seven major authors. A "trickle-up" theory of literature, one might call it—or, in light of the generally vivifying (even vulgarizing) effect Reynolds detects popular authors had on their betters, "the exuberance of influence" (*pace* Harold Bloom). Reynolds goes so far as to argue that this influence from below was crucial, rather than merely incidental. "It is the ability of literary texts to absorb the subversive images of its contemporary culture but at the same time to redirect these elements toward the suggestive and the genuinely human that accounts for their universality and enduring appeal."

That statement is both remarkable for and representative in its reductiveness, a conspicuous quality in *Beneath the American Renaissance*. If, to take one example, Hawthorne was a devoted reader of newspapers (he was), and if newspapers and popular fiction battened on scandal (they did), and if one of the recurring figures in contemporary scandals was the licentious minister—"the reverend rake"—then Arthur Dimmesdale (in *The Scarlet Letter*) is a reverend rake. Well, yes and no. Too often, Reynolds will lead us through various works by George Lippard, Ned Buntline, William Gilmore Simms and their ilk, then point to something similar in Melville or Poe. And there you have it: *Only connect*. It's never quite that simple with either literature or the imaginations that produce it.

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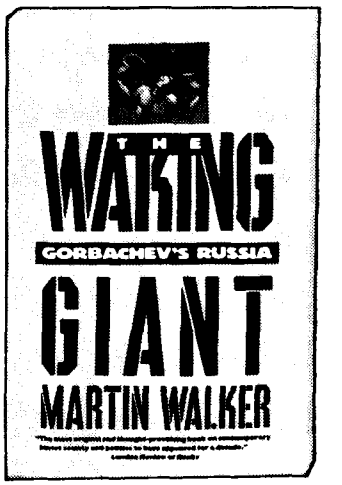
Similarities abound, but congruences do not. Complementary problems here are repetitiveness and overkill, as we keep hearing about the same books—and the same elements from them.

There is much to admire in *Beneath the American Renaissance*. Reynolds is particularly good on Whitman, the relationship between whose work and surroundings is so rich and varied. Yet Reynolds never shakes a key methodological problem (one which, I daresay, he does not consider a problem). "Reconstructive criticism" is Reynolds's term for what he has done: "this approach calls upon the historical critic to reconstruct as completely as possible the socioliterary milieu of literary works through the exploration of a broad array of forgotten social and imaginative texts, paving the way for responsible reinterpretations of canonized works and making possible the rediscovery of lost literature."

Besides its logistical impracticality (as Thoreau said, "Read the best books first, or you may not have a chance to read them at all"), Reynolds's method amounts to an unwieldy push-me, pull-you, an unwieldiness his book embodies, at once dedicated to "specific socioliterary forces" while also employing sophisticated metacritical approaches. It does not so much "bridge the gap between . . . literature as self-referential and [as] cultural history" as extend it further in both directions. Having it both ways, while fully developing neither, this impressive a book is far less illuminating than one might have expected. □



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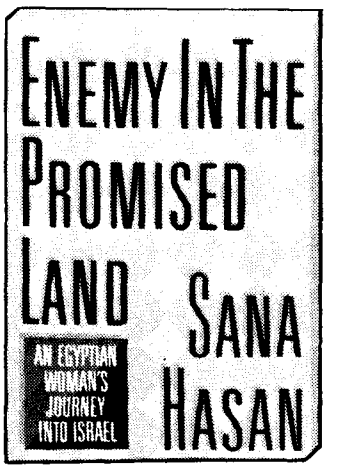

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SCHOCKEN BOOKS

THROUGH A BLOOD-STAINED LENS

A WOMAN RUN MAD
John L'Heureux
Viking, $17.95, 258 pp.

Linda Simon

More than twenty years ago, when John L'Heureux was studying for his ordination as a Jesuit priest and writing (and publishing) poetry, he reported in his journal that Carolyn Kizer had written him, "telling me that all of my poems of the last year fail because they substitute violence for inspiration."

Later, when his fiction was published, many stories would reflect this fascination with violence and with the grotesque. L'Heureux's characters, often lonely, ostracized, unable to love, take desperate steps to communicate their silent rage. Isaac, in "Something Missing," (from L'Heureux's early collection, *Family Affairs*, 1974) burns his coach's desk, but not before he carves "I hate you" into the wooden top. Leonora, in "Brief Lives in California" (*Desires*, 1981), breaks down extravagantly because an English teacher deems her "average." Her mother, responding to a world that includes Patty Hearst, Charles Manson, and hundreds of corpses in Guyana, decides to kill the unfortunate teacher. "It was the way you expressed yourself today," she concluded, "you shot somebody."

Now, in *A Woman Run Mad*, L'Heureux pursues the violent once more, this time attempting his own Greek tragedy. His characters live at the periphery of society, without any sense of community. J.J. Quinn, a would-be novelist, was denied tenure at Williams College and cannot seem to get started either on his novel or on his proposed study of nineteenth-century American Catholicism. Sarah Slade is a socialite who murdered her lover when he threatened to abandon her, and who now hovers at the edge of sanity, believing herself to be capable of destruction and malice beyond imagining. Angelo Tallino is a male prostitute, a homosexual with an insatiable desire for sex and with

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a philosophical passion for Camus and Kierkegaard. After his sister marries Sarah's brother, Angelo is given the task of being Sarah's bodyguard.

And then there is Claire. Claire had been a fat, unattractive child, an outcast. When we meet her, Claire is all intellect: a classical scholar given to Latin interjections, who is writing a book on the women in Euripides, who has a successful teaching career, who celebrates her cerebral relationship with her husband, Quinn, and who has just discovered that she is pregnant. Soon she discovers, too, that Quinn is having an affair with Sarah.

The affair, Sarah's sordid past, and Angelo's energetic pastimes afford an opportunity for plenty of kinky sex and plenty of blood. There is also a gun, hidden under Kleenex, and it is bound to be used. But by whom? Against whom? And once it is used, how will this story be distinguished from such a mundane tale of lust and revenge as, say, *Fatal Attraction*?

L'Heureux has larger issues in mind. He sees Claire, the woman run mad, as a modern Medea. She and Angelo discuss grand philosophical issues. And the novel becomes not merely a tale of passion, but an exploration of the philosophical premises by which we live.

It is in these philosophical interludes that the novel works least. It is an admirable thriller: L'Heureux tantalizes us with the gun until the final pages. But the characters are so essentially one-dimensional—short-story characters given too much room in the expanse of longer fiction—that we do not really believe in their struggles. Sarah is so ethereal she threatens to evaporate. Quinn is a caricature of a repressed, sexually inexperienced man reveling in newly-discovered lust. Angelo sometimes comes alive in these pages—L'Heureux has a masterly eye for the telling gesture—but his forays into literature and philosophy ultimately fall flat. And Claire—Claire is no Medea: she has none of the dark grandeur, even when she confronts the harrowing futility of an abortion. Her transition from good sport to vengeful fury appears too abrupt because we know so little about her.

In the journals he kept before his ordination, L'Heureux copied a passage from Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*, a particularly "horrific" passage, he says, about a snake choking on a toad, oozing blood, and being stamped upon and killed by the man who discovers the awful sight. "The mass crushed and slithered. The white canvas on his tennis shoes was blood-stained and sticky. But it was action. Action relieved him. He strode to the barn, with blood on his shoes." The image, said L'Heureux, was Woolf's symbol "of the world as she saw it at the height of World War II."

It is close to L'Heureux's vision of the world as he sees it at the end of the twentieth century, a world in which action—the more violent and grisly the better—brings a relief that cannot be achieved through introspection, communication, or love. It is a world peopled by emotional casualties, by outsiders. His is a bleak vision, and *A Woman Run Mad* is a terrifying book. □

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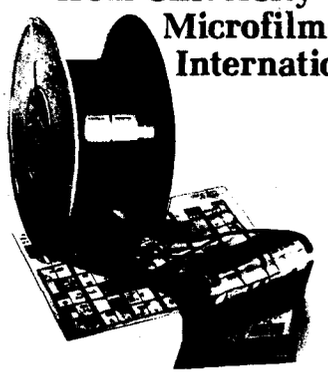

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CRITICISM AT A CLOSE RANGE

THE FICTION OF WALKER PERCY
John Edward Hardy
University of Illinois, $24.95, 317 pp.

James P. Degnan

In an age, today's, when university presses seem obsessed with publishing critical rubbish—I mean the nonsense of the deconstructionists (structuralists et al.) telling us that words have no meaning, that literature is not about life but about its "own textual problems," and that interpretation is more important and "creative" than the literary works being interpreted—it is a delight to discover that the University of Illinois Press has published a first-rate critical book that runs entirely counter to the above mentioned nonsense: John Edward Hardy's *The Fiction of Walker Percy*.

Erudite, beautifully reasoned and written, Hardy's book illustrates what is best about modern criticism.

Unlike other books about Percy—books that focus on Percy as Southerner, Roman Catholic, philosopher, physician, scientist—books more interested in Percy the man or Percy the man of ideas, Hardy's book is primarily a study of Percy as literary artist, of Percy's virtuosity in the handling of character, plot, theme, imagery, narrative technique, and language. Each chapter of Hardy's book provides a close reading of a Percy novel (from *The Moviegoer* through *The Thanatos Syndrome*), and these readings range from discussions of the symbolic significance of Percy's use of names and places; to the "painterly character" of Percy's style (i.e., how Percy's interest

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in the art of painting has influenced the voice informing his fiction); to Percy's use of Arthurian legend and Miltonic imagery in novels like *Lancelot* and *The Second Coming*; to the major targets of Percy's satire, "scientific salvationists of the left, myth-mongers, sexual liberationists." Considering that such groups include "most readers of . . . serious fiction," Hardy says, " it is not difficult to understand the critical antagonism his [Percy's] work has provoked."

In addition to reading Percy's fiction as fiction, Hardy makes some nice connections between Percy the man and Percy the novelist. Hardy speculates, for example, that Percy's lifelong financial independence may be the source of a serious defect in the novelist's "social vision," a defect that accounts for the fact that there are no major characters in Percy's novels who must work for a living, no major characters who, Hardy observes, "must face life without some material legacy . . . and without as good a formal education as they are willing to accept. . . ."

A highly original, always readable, richly detailed and documented study of and tribute to Walker Percy, *The Fiction of Walker Percy* is a splendid example of what criticism should be. □

IN BRIEF

ADIOS MR. MOXLEY: THIRTEEN SORIES. *by Josephine Jacobsen. The Jackpine Press (Winston-Salem, N.C.), $17.95, $10.95 paper, 157 pp.*

Precision-chosen words — Ms. Jacobsen's go thwack into place like digital beads on an abacus. You can't imagine there could be any other words that would fit precisely or do the exacting work that she has them do. And work they do — enough to make you flinch.

In "The Ring of Kerry," we meet the twenty-two-year-old Annie vacationing with her lover in Ireland. One windswept night, she sees her elderly hostess near death, in the throes of an asthmatic attack. The lady's maid, Bridie, had been hovering over her mistress like a madonna. The scene strikes Annie with metaphysical vertigo.

> She moves back, into the hall, down the hall and into their empty room. She sits on the edge of the bed and sees Bridie's face and the curve of her shoulders above the bed, as though she held the whole huge soiled object in her stringy arms. This is the center of the night. Around it is the big strange house and, around the house, the rain and the wind. Outside of that there is absolutely nothing.
>
> Annie is in the center of the nothing . . . I am lost, she thinks. I have no circle.

The familiar suddenly unfamiliar, gravity gone, spinning out of orbit — Ms. Jacobsen is expert at conjuring such situations.

There is a contained, suspenseful edge to these stories. They move meticulously, with an economy of expression, toward climaxes of often terrible grace — stark recognitions and moral awakenings. Maybelle, the cleaning lady in "Criminal Career," works for a very rich family of moral morons, clearly her inferiors. Her own corruption, then, catches her unawares — almost. In "Vocation," the absence of a doctor's smile alerts his patient to an evil whose name is legion. Mrs. Bart, the recluse in "Sound of Shadows," lives in a permanent TV-stupor — until she is shocked awake, incongruously enough, by a robber's switchblade. "The Edge of the Sea" seems an innocent story of a lovely Caribbean idyll, until a casual remark at tea reveals the deadly nature of the play.

REVIEWERS

RABBI JACK RIEMER *co-edited* Ethical Wills: A Modern Jewish Treasury.

MARK FEENEY *is book editor of the* Boston Globe.

LINDA SIMON *teaches expository writing at Harvard.*

JAMES P. DEGNAN *is a professor of English at the University of Santa Clara.*

DAVID TOOLAN, S.J., *is book editor of* Commonweal *and author of* Facing West from California's Shores *(Crossroad).*

A husband, in "The Pear Tree," consoles his bereaved wife with a lie — and then cannot bring himself to share with her the truth when it comes. Ms. Jacobsen's wits are uncannily sharp. I'd trust her in the dark. D.T.

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 354)

the past are now being used to cover Israel's real goals for Gaza and the West Bank. And those goals are exactly what Shamir says they are: Full control. What Shamir doesn't say is that such control provides Israel with a cheap source of labor, a market for its products, and $100 million each year in taxes and goods above and beyond what the occupation costs them.

Gaza and the West Bank should be demilitarized for Israel's protection and given over to Palestinian control. That is

(Continued on page 382)

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RELIGIOUS BOOKNOTES

Spiritualities of the world

Mary Gerhart

One of the most promising events in religious scholarship is Crossroad's publication of seven volumes, now going on eight, of a projected series of twenty-five volumes in *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*, edited by Ewert Cousins of Fordham University. This series is a timely addition to the burgeoning in the last decade of new books on spirituality. The ongoing Paulist Press series on individual "masters" in Western spirituality, their series on sources of American spirituality, the Amity House series on classical figures in Eastern spirituality, and the recently published Oxford dictionary on spirituality—to mention only a few—have responded to and cultivated a renewed interest in spirituality comparable in importance to the interest in liturgical reform in the early twentieth century.

The retrieval of classic texts by individual authors is indispensable. Equally valuable, however, is a historical and theological context for interpreting these individual writings in relation to their respective religious traditions. This monumental project of interpretation has been undertaken in the Crossroad series. The texts already published—*Christian Spirituality I: Origins to the Twelfth Century* (Vol. 16); *Jewish Spirituality II: From the 16th Century Renewal to the Present* (Vol. 14); and *Hindu Spirituality: Vedas through Vedanta* (Vol. 6)—as well as those reviewed here make a significant contribution to the contemporary understanding of religion.

Completed, the series will include two volumes on the "meeting of spiritualities," the first volume tracing common themes which the general editor hopes may "provide the basis for a positive encounter," and the second cross-referencing the series with a dictionary of terms. In addition, most of the individual essays include annotated bibliographies for further reading, and each volume is indexed separately. Volumes 13, 15, and 19 all have more than thirty illustrations; Volume 17 has twelve illustrations—all aptly chosen by Diane Aspotolos-Cappadona, the art editor for the series.

Each volume consists of a series of essays by specialists, written to be of interest to the general reader as well as to the scholar. For example, in *Jewish Spirituality I*, Jon Levenson's article on "The Jerusalem Temple in Devotional and Visionary Experience,"

Jewish Spirituality from the Bible through the Middle Ages, *edited by Arthur Green, Crossroad, $49.50 cloth, 450 pp.*

the first and second temple periods are differentiated historically and devotionally throughout the periods covered. "Temple" as a concept in Jewish spirituality is presented as being both like and unlike the "portable temple" between the Sinai revelation and the building of the first temple. Another essay, "Varieties of Judaism in the Formative Age," by Jacob Neusner, traces the effects of not rebuilding the second temple after its destruction, in 70 C.E., on four different groups: the apocalyptic writers, the Dead Sea community at Qumran, the Christian church, and the Pharisaic sect. As is typical of the series as a whole, the historical framework and identifications are clear and reiterated whenever necessary.

Because each volume is arranged topically as well as chronologically, some figures and events are treated in more than one context. Philo, in *Jewish Spirituality I*, for example, has a chapter to himself (written by David Winston), extensive commentary in Steven Fraade's "Ascetical Aspects of Ancient Judaism," and several references in Robert Goldenberg's "Law and Spirit in Talmudic Religion." For all this frequency of mention, I found no duplication of coverage. Multiple coverage here yields not

Islamic Spirituality: Foundations, *edited by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Crossroad, $49.50, 450 pp.*

repetition but a welcome multifaceted understanding.

In some of the best articles, the essayists act as guides through different interpretations of their material. The reader is occasionally obliged to decide among conflicting hypotheses. Why, for example, if it is agreed that the Hebrew Psalms have a cultic connection, have there not been found prescriptions for liturgical procedures? Is the non-existence of rubrics best explained by postdating the composition of the Psalms after that of the Priestly Code or by finding a reason in a possibly deliberate omission of rubric by Israel's priests, who wished to isolate Israel's cult from the tendency toward magic in their neighbors' spiritual practices? James Kugel, in "Topics in the History of the Spirituality of the Psalms" entertains both hypotheses before saying which he thinks is more plausible. Different hypotheses regarding the sense of the nearness or distance of Yahweh as represented in the Psalms are also entertained.

MARY GERHART *teaches hermeneutics, religion, and literature at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York. She co-authored (with Allen Russell)* Metaphoric Process *(Texas Christian U.).*

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One has the sense that the structure of the series as a whole leads to new insights quite apart from any deliberate effort at comparison. In *Islamic Spirituality I*, for example, it is stated that the Quran is the "verbatim revelation of the Word of God, revealed in Arabic through the archangel Gabriel to the Prophet." The notion of "verbatim" unexpectedly receives an

Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman, *edited by A.H. Armstrong, Crossroad, $49.50, 517 pp.*

implicit comparative context, however, when it is further stated that "the text of the Quran is thus not based on long periods of compilation and interpretation by human agents." In other words, unlike the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Scriptures, the Quran was written shortly after its reception by one person as revelation. Again, in the essay, "Female Spirituality in Islam," it is claimed that "the male and the female are absolutely equal in their relationship with their Creator" but also that "both the male and the female are assigned different roles by nature." An implicit justification can be found in a later claim that women have direct access to Allah, there being no priestly caste, clergy, or ecclesiastical system to intervene.

One might have wished for a more even-handed treatment of women's spirituality across the several volumes. There are extended discussions of women's spirituality in three of the four volumes reviewed here: for example, "Female Spirituality in Islam" by Saadia Khawar Khan Chishti in *Islamic Spirituality*; "Religious Women in the Later Middle Ages" by Caroline Walker Bynum, "Marian Devotion in the Western Church," and three chapters on the influence of women mystics in *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*; and an unusual piece, "In Praise of Nonsense" (an analysis of a long poem from the Nag Hammadi Library, which is the "self-revelation of a powerful goddess") by Patricia Cox Miller in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman*. In two of these three volumes inclusive language also prevails.

In the fourth volume, however, opportunities to include women are curiously neglected. Female divine imagery for Yahweh, for example, is asserted, without argument, to be non-existent in the Hebrew Bible: "Some contemporary authors have attempted to find female divine imagery related to Yahweh in the Bible, but their efforts are not convincing." Another claim—that "the absence of that female imagery accounts for the widespread popular worship of goddesses which is condemned by the biblical authors"—receives no further comment whereas the relationship of Yahweh to Canaanite gods is generously interpreted in another part of the essay. The observation that some titles of Yahweh are joined to that of a goddess, perhaps as a consort, begs for further comment. Israelites are referred to throughout the essays by male pronouns (a practice also made into policy in the volume on Islamic Spirituality), thus leaving women largely invisible and unaccounted for.

The general focus for the series is on the "inner dimension of the person called . . . 'the spirit'"—that spiritual core which is "the deepest center of the person . . . where the person is open to the transcendent dimension, where the person experiences ultimate reality." While the series as a whole "explores the discovery of this core, the dynamics of its development, and its journey to the ultimate goal" (Preface), each volume begins with a statement of that particular tradition's understanding of the term "spirituality."

Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation, *edited by Jill Raitt in collaboration with Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff, Crossroad, $49.50, $19.95 paper, 479 pp.*

I found it difficult to tear myself away from reading these volumes. The scholarship is fresh and invites further reflection. In her article, "The Faith of the Pharaonic Period," in *Classic Mediterranean Spirituality*, for example, Gwyn Griffith makes room for new thought in subheadings such as "Basic Cults Reconciled," "A Lush Pluralism." "Doctrines of Creation," and "Primitive Echoes." And H. D. Saffrey breaks new ground in "The Piety and Prayers of Ordinary Men and Women in Late Antiquity" because, as he notices, "ordinary men and women, by definition, leave no personal mark on history" and therefore can be grasped only when someone else gives them a voice. Saffrey carefully reconstructs what can be known about the spirituality of these people who have been rendered mute by history done according to traditionalist methods.

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(Continued from page 379)
the humane and right thing to do. And all the rest is obfuscation.

JOSEPH D. POLICANO

Women & the bishops

Chicago, Ill.

To the Editors: Your editorial ["Dear John," April 22] on the bishops' excursion into the woman-problem (*their* problem), was forthright and to the point, the point approached [by the bishops] but not close enough. As some other editorialist said of it, the document "evades its own theology, its own logic," stopping short, shy of the point.

As women's ordination, full-scale, moves toward possibility, paradoxically, it matters less. With new definitions and experiences that lead to definition, the formal succession, laying-on the "right" hands, matters less to more people.

On the one hand, as one of my daughters observes, since "they" have allowed girls to become crossing guards, no boy will join the force, and those already assigned ("ordained") are turning in their patrol-boy belts. This macho discounting of anything women do is familiar.

On the other hand, if called, any woman should be able to present herself to the community of believers as a candidate for the laying-on of hands that represents formal ordination.

KATHARINE BYRNE

Women, men, & God

Richmond Hill, N.Y.

To the Editors: The newspaper accounts of the proposed draft of the bishops' pastoral on women are interesting both in what they say and what they don't say. Since I have not yet received a copy of the draft, my reactions can be only to what has appeared in print and my own experiences.

One of the real tragedies of this ongoing story lies in the ways both men and women have suffered not only in their relationships to each other but also in their relationship to God. The God Who is, Who creates, and Who loves, most often is identified and addressed as and all-powerful male being with all the attributes of father, king, ruler, etc., who calls and saves "his sons." When this image of God is preached by males, the concept of God becomes even more limited. Women have no place, as is evidenced by the language used in prayer and worship and in the many forms of denial and mistreatment that they are subject to. Who then is the God that we pray to? Were not all humans—male and female—made in the image and likeness of God?

Without knowing God, our knowledge of ourselves and others is also very limited. This causes fear and, from that, such sins as sexism. All are hurt, whether they are men or women. Women, the obvious victims, are beginning to refuse the unacceptable and [are beginning] to be responsive to the call of God in their own lives. Men also are victims. Not only do they block the action of God in themselves and others, but they also rob themselves of the ability to know, appreciate, and work with women who are human members of God's creation.

Is not the work of the church to spread the knowledge and love of God and to encourage the presence of God in individuals, in the church, and in society? When members of the clergy are sexist, are they not opposing the work of the church, the work of their lives? This sin, especially within the church, has not only deprived women of their God-given human dignity, but has also deprived men of their credibility when they try to talk of the place of God and the church in our lives.

SISTER ELIZABETH GRAHAM

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Theology Workshop

24th Theology Workshop, St. Mary's College, Box AB, Moraga, CA 94575, June 20-24, Bernard Cooke: Liturgy in a Post-Vatican II Church. Write: Timothy McCarthy, Director.

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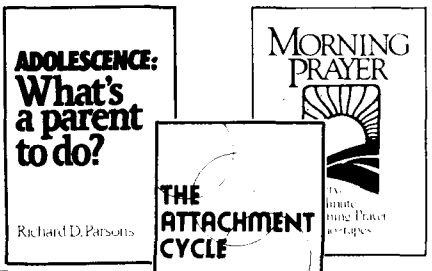

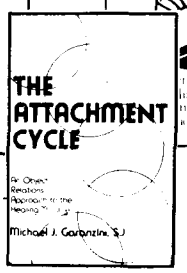

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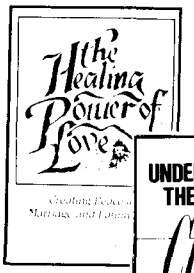

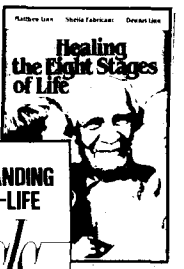

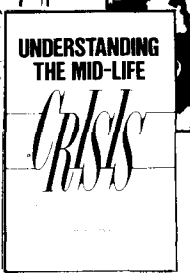

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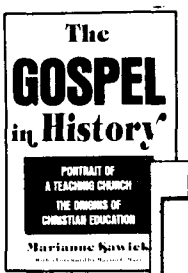

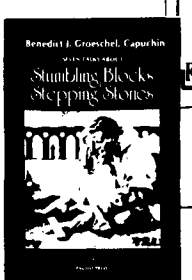

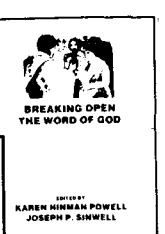

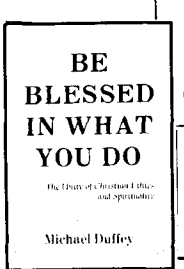

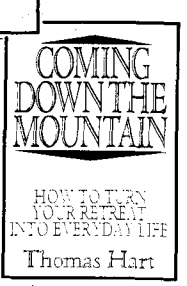

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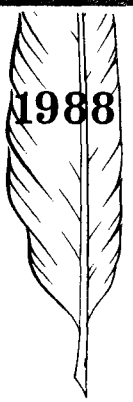

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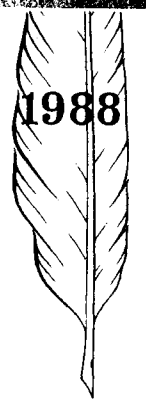

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